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ABSTRACT

A special theme issue of this biannually published journal illustrates a range of topics that public folklorists in New York state have addressed in their work. The first article, "Forty Years before the Mast: Sailing the Stormy and Serene Seas of Public Folklore" by Bruce R. Buckley, introduces the volume by setting public folklore in its social and political context. Public schools become a focus for many public folklore projects in the 1960s. Education programs in New York museums and local youth organizations gained new impetus during the 1970s. The 1980s may well be looked upon as the Golden Age of public folklore in New York State. Other articles in this issue include: "A Story Worth Telling: Publishing in the Public Sector" (Ellen McHale); "Folk Arts on the Radio: Issues in the Production of 'Old Traditions--New Sounds'" (Rebecca S. Miller); "The Making of 'God's Mother is the Morning Star': A Case Study in Videotaping an Elderly Folk Artist" (Karen D. Lux); "Trouble Shooting: Overcoming Problems of Collaboration in Film Production" (Peter Biella); "Fieldwork among White Russian Emigres: Some Conceptual Considerations" (Peter Voorheis); "Adirondack Balsam Pillows: Folk Art, Tourist Art, or Subsistence" (Todd DeGarmo); "The Government Giveth and the Government Taketh Away: Helping or Hindering Community Traditions?" (Varick A. Chittenden); and "A Disussion: Community Cultural Empowerment" (Daniel Frank Ward, ed.).

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New York FOLKLORE

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Special Issue

Folk Arts in New York State: A Public Forum

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Summer-Fall, 1989

Cover photo: Folklorist Rebecca Miller presents Yiddish violinist the Late Leon Schwartz in concert at Snug Harbor, Staten Island, September, 1988. Photo by Janis Benincasa

NEW YORK FOLKLORE
Vol. XV, Nos. 3-4, 1989

Editors' Preface

This special issue of *New York Folklore* is transitional between two editorships. Outgoing editor Phillips Stevens, Jr. deserves the credit for the concept and planning, along with guest editor Daniel Franklin Ward. As incoming editors, we respectfully acknowledge the creative and intellectual efforts of our colleagues, who have brought the original idea to fruition. Our sole task has been to see the final product through to print.

"New York Folklore: A Public Forum" marks an effort by *New York Folklore* to open a forum for the ideas of folklorists working outside the field of academe. These folklorists, many of whom were trained in the academy, frequently do not have the research and writing time which their university-based fellows enjoy. Public folklorists publish, but many times their publications are aimed at those outside their discipline — indeed, outside academe altogether.

Public projects, even when they include an extensive documentation phase, usually require the folklorist to work to deadline to produce an exhibition, film, program, or popular publication. Most budgets for these projects do not support time for the kind of reflective writing which might arise out of the experiences of public folklorists. This is unfortunate, since the theoretical and ethical issues confronted by the public folklorist are often precisely those of keen interest and relevance to the field as a whole.

An overview of the contents of the present issue will serve to illustrate the range of topics which public folklorists in New York State have addressed in their work. Buckley's very personal reminiscences of the history of public folklore in the United States appropriately introduce the volume by setting public folklore in its social and political context. Seen from the inside, by a veteran in the field, public folklore today emerges as the product of a complex interaction between forces for social progress, the desire for identity in America, and the ramifying effects of increasingly powerful and influential mass media.

A variety of social and intellectual problems in the practice of public folklore are considered in papers by DeGarmo, Voorheis, and Chittenden. DeGarmo's and Voorheis' essays both deal with the definition of folk art in terms of its function within the community, and raise questions about the congruence (or not) between definitions in practice and in theory. Chittenden's case study points to the responsibility of the public folklorist to act as advocate in defining traditions, when such definitions are used to

legislate the protection or disruption of local custom.

The experiences of public folklorists qualify them to speak with expertise on some of the technical matters involved in putting together presentations of folklore materials for the public. McHale, Lux, Biella, and Miller discuss some of practical, ethical, and intellectual questions which face the public folklorist in creating publications, documentary films, and radio documentaries. Negotiating compromises between the ideal outcome and the exigencies of production sometimes leads to the re-formulation of initial aims and concepts.

The volume concludes with an edited transcript of a discussion held at the 1989 New York State Folk Arts Round Table, in Syracuse, New York. The discussion, facilitated by Martin Koenig, brought together public folklorists from inside and outside New York State to address the problem of community cultural empowerment. The notion of empowerment has figured significantly in discussions within public folklore in the recent past, and the 1989 Round Table broke new ground in addressing the issue directly. Critical commentary, "insider" perspectives, and the recounting of personal involvements in issues of empowerment combined to create a multi-layered discussion of a set of problems which public folklorists are uniquely situated to consider. *New York Folklore* takes pride in presenting this landmark session to its reading audience.

Because our involvement in the present volume has been marginal, we feel it is appropriate to reserve our statement as incoming editors until the Winter/Spring 1990 issue. In the forthcoming issue, therefore, we look forward to outlining some of our goals for the journal and for its place within the field of folklore.

DEBORAH BLINCOE
JOHN FORREST

NEW YORK FOLKLORE
Vol. XV, Nos. 3-4, 1989

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NEW YORK FOLKLORE
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FORTY YEARS BEFORE THE MAST

Sailing the Stormy and Serene Seas of Public Folklore

BRUCE R. BUCKLEY

Introduction

This article is based on my personal experiences in the field of public folklore over the past forty years. It is not a definitive history of the movement nor is it merely an anecdotal account of my life history. Rather it is my thoughts on what the field was like as I remember it and how it has changed dramatically over the past forty years.

The term "public folklore" did not exist when I became interested in the folk field in the 1940s, although without my knowledge of public folklore it was one of the reasons I became a folklorist. During my undergraduate days after World War II, I became interested in the folk music I heard on records and decided to take up the guitar and learn a few of the songs myself. It was not a new direction. My mother was a singer, my father played the mandolin, my uncle had his own country band before he was killed in a barroom fight, and from age five I had sung solos in church and in minstrel shows.

"Public folklore" and its precursor "applied folklore" have the same general definition and differ only slightly in motivations and strategies. Applied folklore did not emphasize public funding as part of the definition, nor was there the extreme chasm that later developed between applied and academic folklore. Like its sister discipline, applied anthropology, public folklore advocates for the goals and aspirations of voiceless groups struggling for recognition and equality. Its aim is the communication of the knowledge, attitudes and skills of a folk group to another group with the intent of changing the other group's perspective. In contemporary application it also includes the rediscovery of roots by the folk group. Among the first public folklorists were the Brothers Grimm who consciously rewrote the tales of the folk to make them more acceptable to the literary

"Public folklore advocates for the goals and aspirations of groups struggling for recognition and equality."

scholar and the reading public.

Because public folklore is a form of the communication process it seems appropriate to describe its history in terms of the *source(s)* of the information, the content and form of the *message*, the *channels* used and the *receiver(s)* or audience. The source may be single or multiple. Potential sources include such diverse groups as scholars, interpreters, artists, sponsors, funders and the folk themselves. The message may vary in both content and form, ranging from protest songs performed in a festival context to historical background material presented in a scholarly lecture. All available channels have carried the message: slick videos, massive live concerts, and interpersonal exchanges local gathering places. The audiences vary as much as the sources, and the folk arts message has been put to such diverse purposes as teaching the children, inspiring the young, providing roots for the middle aged and stroking the nostalgic of the elderly.

The folk arts communication process has been dynamic, and its elements have varied through time. In each decade new ideas are introduced, new opportunities are available and new challenges are encountered. Once a new approach is introduced it takes on a life of its own. It is changed, revised and revived in each succeeding decade creating a multi-faceted, multi-layered history.

The 1930s and 1940s

During the Depression, the Public Works Project of the New Deal included folklore and folk arts as part of its public programming. The sources of the information were the United States Government and college folklore professors. Using young professional and semi-professional artists, they interpreted the folkways of the poor and oppressed through oral, written and visual channels. The primary audiences, although this was never stated, were the folk groups themselves who needed encouragement and hope during this crisis period. World War II disrupted this public sector program, and by 1945 this line of work was no longer considered necessary. However, interest and concern for folk groups had been set in motion, especially among college students.

In the late 40s the sources became very diverse and the folk movement had little continuity. Many of the scholars involved in the government's public projects returned to university life and settled into academe, sometimes trying to forget the scholarly sins of their youth which may have had a tinge of socialism in them. Folk expression, particularly folksongs, continued to be popular.

The "folk" performers of the early period — Burl Ives, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Josh White, and others — continued their careers as singers and actors. Labor movements and groups such as "People Songs" continued their early advocacies and added new messages from social and political causes from around the United States and the world: the anti-nuclear movement, anti-fascism, racial equality and so forth. A small town boy from southern Ohio didn't have much opportunity to participate in these primar-

ily urban oriented groups. However, magazines and recordings were available, and recordings were inexpensive (the 78 rpm disks were on sale to make way for the new "long playing" recordings). Other performers, such as Richard Dhyer Bennet, John Jacob Niles and Susan Reed, were professional musicians who transformed the "rough" songs of the folk to acceptable art songs for the less politically oriented.

Government support continued on a limited basis with the Folk Song Archives at the Library of Congress. This department and its various directors (including Ben Botkin, the leading advocate of public folklore at that time) provided authentic field recordings of American folk songs for the scholar and the emerging "folk" singer. More sympathetic with the public need for these traditional materials than the commercial distributors, The Library of Congress recordings offered recordings of authentic folksingers performing traditional folk songs.

My first direct experience with academic folklore was in Columbus, Ohio when I became curious about a public lecture on folk songs by Fran Utley at Ohio State. The lecture was illustrated with folksongs by a young graduate student, D.K. Wilgus, from whom I learned that there were many variations of the same song. It was after this lecture I also met a one-legged panhandler who was a veteran of the Lincoln Brigade of the Spanish Civil War. His stories made some of the songs I was learning from songbooks of the urban folk movement more real for me.

Folksong gatherings were a part of college life during this period, and I participated in many of them. As a member of this active audience I learned many new "folk" songs of the southern mountains, labor unrest, Israeli nationhood and Black protest. Since I had experience in commercial radio, a friend at the local college radio station asked me to produce a folksong program. Thus, in 1949, my series "American Folkways" was born. The first programs were mostly recordings with a few songs I sang myself. The station was pleased with the interest in the program, and the next year I produced the series for The National Educational Radio Network.

The 1950s

During the 50s public folklore expanded, with multiple sources, messages, channels and receivers. While trying out the "real world" for a couple of years after college, I continued playing my guitar and became interested in Black music — especially jazz and blues. I became friends with the Reverend A.L. Kershaw, winner of the $64,000 Question on jazz. As an amateur enthusiast, he and folklorist John Ball helped develop the jazz tours of the George Lewis Jazz Band (the Old Bunk Johnson Band which later became the core of the Preservation Hall group) in colleges throughout the Midwest. Through their connections with Decca Records and American Music, they were able to get many of the old jazz standards reissued.

The recording industry produced many folksong albums during this

period. No producer was more important to public folklore than Moe Asch, with his Folkways Records. Folkways combined the talents of traditional and semi-professional folksingers with well written and researched album notes about the songs and their historical period or geographical area. Asch produced many recordings just for love of the music, but he was also concerned with the passing on of traditions to young people. Many of his releases were for children or for use in school curricula. With the help of Pete Seeger and other members of the Weavers, Folkways made enough money on albums to subsidize many less commercially successful recordings. Asch was already recording ethnic materials before programs of hyphenated American folk expressions became popular. Like many other young folklorists of the time, I produced and performed on one Folkways, recording in my then specialty "Ohio Valley Ballads."

The sources for public programming became complex during the 50s. For example, a recording might include a commercial producer who knew nothing about folklore; or it might feature one who was interested in the field. (Besides Asch, there was Kenneth Goldstein, who later left the record production field to become an academic folklorist.) The performer might be a professional musician, a revival singer of "folk" songs, an authentic folk musician, a folklorist, or a graduate student. The writers of the album notes which became an integral part of the message form came from equally diversified backgrounds.

"The McCarthy hearings briefly placed a damper on the folksong movement, but there was interaction between scholars and performers."

Although the McCarthy hearings briefly placed a damper on the folksong movement, there was a great deal of interaction between the young folklore scholars and the performers of the period. Many of the performers based their material on field collections. Bob Gibson, later of television's "Hootenanny" fame, used Midwest field collections extensively and often stopped by Indiana University to check for new material. The messages of these singers ranged from composed folksongs, popular folksongs, and rewritten or arranged material based on field collections to authentic field materials. The format, whether in concert or on recordings, always included an introduction to the background and authenticity of the song, in the tradition of the headnotes for Child Ballads in published folksong collections.

A new channel was introduced in the 50s for the emerging "folk" artist: the coffee house. This institution, in addition to providing a showcase for the "folk" singer, created a more intimate context and encouraged the singer of songs to write his own "folk" songs. Writers of new songs, in the tradition of Woody Guthrie, became highly successful. This created a controversy between the public and academic aspects of folklore. What

was a folksong and could folksongs be written by the media troubadors of the twentieth century? The academic folklorist evaluated material in an historical context while the public folklorist placed more emphasis on contemporary expressions and the creative process. At one extreme folklore was still defined as popular antiquities while on the other it was perceived as the dynamic expressions of a contemporary cultural group. These two orientations still remain viable today but no longer necessarily refect whether the folklorist is in academe or public programming.

My personal contact with coffee house performance was brief. One weekend in Chicago at the Gate of Horn and the Horn of Plenty convinced me that my performance forte was not the coffee house. The emphasis on unique performance style and technical proficiency required a performer to devote more time than I was willing to give. I wanted to be a folklorist rather than a folk singer. In addition, the lifestyle of long road trips and back to back concerts was not to my liking, and indeed the stress created by this lifestyle destroyed the careers of some of my artist friends.

Many "folk" singers of this era became interested in the academic study of folklore. In 1951, I returned to Miami University of Ohio for my master's degree in history and English literature and met John Ball who formally introduced me to the rigors of academic folklore. The subject of my master's essay was a field collection of folksongs and ballads from my home county in southern Ohio. There I met many interesting and sincere individuals who sang folksongs and ballads in the continuing folk tradition.

Every folklorist who does extensive field research has favorite stories about the talented people with whom they have shared many hours. One of my favorite anecdotes concerns the Copas faily of Adams County, Ohio. While I was collecting from Minor Copas the comic songs of his blackface minstrel days, his wife (his second cousin, also a Copas) was preparing lunch. Completely unexpectedly, from the kitch I heard: "Queen Jane was in labor, full six weeks or more . . ." For the next week I collected Child ballad texts from both husband and wife, sometimes with heated discussions between them as to which family version was correct. This contact with the real folk and the rediscovery of my roots not only provided me with a new repertoire but convinced me to make folklore my profession. The next year I went to Indiana University to study with Stith Thompson.

During my twelve years at Indiana I became friends with the folklorists of the future, many having the same interests and background as mine. Joe Hickerson, Ellen Stekert, Bob Black and I formed a singing group called "The Settlers" and supplemented our income with concerts throughout the Midwest. One of our performance venues was an American Folklore Society meeting held in Chicago. We tried to make our material authentic, entertaining and educational to groups who were interested in folk expressions but knew little about them. We singers of folk songs had many debates about how much introductory material should be included and how many of the popular sing-along "folksongs" should be on the program. The group broke up and we all went our professional ways about six months

before the Kingston Trio launched their popular "folksong" career.

In the 1950s, commercial television was experimenting with new programming formats, after an initial decade of producing what were essentially radio programs imported into television. It was an opportune time for folklore to be developed for local and regional programming. I was asked by the Indiana University television department to produce and host a half-hour weekly series over the local Indianapolis commercial outlet. During the next four years, "American Folkways" became very popular in the Midwest. The format was a singing balladeer host with guest performers. Each program had a theme of history, geography or human experiences. A group of regular performers included folklore students and faculty, music students, local folk performers and a dance troupe under the direction of Rich Castner (who now teaches dance at the State University of New York, College at Brockport). The program was used to collect folklore through the mails. Contributions included a group of skip rope rhymes from children throughout Indiana, a few of whom were invited to perform on the program. I wrote an article for *Midwest Folklore* based on the rhymes. Texts of ballads and folksongs also were sent in by listeners. Letters were followed up by visits from myself or other graduate students. Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl was one of these students, and he also published based on materials gathered through the program.

"Part of Richard Dorson's strategy was to separate academic folklore from public folklore."

The radio programs were without the official sanction of the Indiana University Folklore Department, especially when Richard Dorson became chairman. It was during this time that doctoral programs in folklore were being developed at Indiana University and the University of Pennsylvania. Previously, folklorsits in the United States had received their degress in English, history, sociology or anthropology. With the establishment of separate folklore departments, there was the struggle to make the new field "legitimate."

The leader of the movement toward professionalism was Richard Dorson, a Harvard trained historian-folklorist who became chairman of the newly formed Folklore Department at Indiana University. Part of his strategy was to separate academic folklore from public folklore. In an article in the *Journal of American Folklore*, he described the state of folklore studies in the United States. He attacked regionalists, such as the New York folklorists, as being too narrow; and public folklorists, such as Ben Botkin, a past editor of the *New York Folklore Quarterly*, as "popularizers." In Dorson's later writings, he further attacked Botkin and his type of folklore as part of a new term he invented: "fakelore." The attempt to establish folklore as an academic discipline was partially successful but it created an open wound within the field which still has not healed completely.

In order to remain in both public and academic branches of folklore, during the summers I produced a more academic television program. It was called, variously, "Midwest Folklore," "Lonesome Traveller," and "Folklore International," and it featured faculty and guests from the Indiana University Folklore Summer Institute. The programs were kinescoped for replay on the Midwest University Educational Network. Such internationally known folklorists as "Uncle" Otto Anderson and Wayland Hand appeared on the series. The highlight (and personal coup) of one program was Vance Randolf being interviewed on Ozark humorous tales by Richard Dorson.

The Reverend Al Kershaw (from Miami University) introduced me to Merv Griffin, who hosted the CBS Sunday morning program "Look Up and Live." Griffin was looking for a Christmas program of folksongs and asked me to perform. His was one of the early shows with a variety format which began using an occasional folk singer. During this same period programs such as "Arthur Godfrey's Hour" were auditioning folk singers for national television programs. The television medium became an even more important channel for the entertainment aspect of folklore during the 60s.

Folklorists of the 50s did not work full time at their profession and did not think full time folklore employment would ever be possible. Stith Thompson refused to take a doctoral student who did not have another way of making a living. I chose to work in the Educational Media Department of Indiana University, building on my early radio and audio experience. I was assigned to the motion picture section where I was fortunate to have excellent instruction. After two years, I was asked to produce educational films in the social studies area. For the next ten years, I worked on films for the high school curriculum and on public affairs programming for the general public. My success in this new area prompted my mentor, Stith Thompson, in his autobiography *Folklorist's Progress* to predict that my folkloristic contribution would be the interpretation of folklore to the general public.

My work in television and motion pictures helped to improve my visual vocabulary and sensitivity, which in turn increased my interest in the visual expressions of folk culture. Although there were no established scholars at Indiana University in the material folk arts, there were opportunities to study with visiting folk arts specialists during summer institutes. During one of these institutes, I met Louis C. Jones and discovered we shared many interests and ideas. Jones invited me to give a concert and teach at the Seminars in American Culture of the New York Historical Association in Cooperstown. Through him, I began to learn more about the outdoor folk museum movement of the 40s, and its European models. I met some of the personnel from other outdoor museums of the East and Northeast and renewed my education in local history and the museum field.

The 1960s

Ben Botkin had long been the chief spokesman for applied or public folklore. From his time as a public sector folklorist with the Library of Congress, this New Yorker wrote and spoke in defense of the use of folklore for better understanding of minorities and under-represented groups throughout the world. In the 50s, he was relentlessly attacked by Richard Dorson, not only for his applied theories and "fakelore," but also for his representation of the New York group of provincial folklorists who were more interested in "New York" than in "folklore." The late 60s saw the end of this divisive battle and the beginning of a new era of folklore. The American Folklore Society had its first independent national meeting in Boston, and Dorson and Botkin buried the hatchet amidst public cheers. Although this truce did not grant public folkloe an equal status with its academic sibling, it provided more opportunity for both groups to meet the challenges of the next two decades. The united effort of both groups was reinforced by the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, with folklore and folk arts program support in both. These public agencies used panels of scholars to evaluate public projects in folklore and folklife.

More emphasis was placed on interpretation of folk culture on radio and television during the 60s than in any previous decade. Public and academic folklorists as well as performers had more and more opportunity to present their messages through these media. The federal government sponsored a Voice of America Series on folklore. Tristram Coffin, at the University of Pennsylvania, called on his fellow folklorists throughout the country to participate. The series was evaluated by the government as successful, and I know because of my part in the program I received letters from all over the world from listeners interested in American folk dance. The series was later published by Basic Books as *American Folklore, Our Living Traditions*, a phrase which has gained renewed use in the late 80s.

Both Coffin and MacEdward Leach, also at the University of Pennsylvania, took advantage of the media resources of the Philadelphia area, producing scholarly scripts for television productions. I helped produce one program with Tris Coffin on "Frankie and Johnny" which featured an emerging folk singer by the name of John Lee Hooker. Our greatest disappointment in that production was the refusal by Mae West to use her recording of "Frankie" on this educational program. Her negative response was framed: "Everything I do is educational." In commercial television, the morning talk show format which matured during the 60s began to feature folklorists and folk performers. The "Today Show," for example, asked me to put together a program on sea shanties for their remote program from

"Ben Botkin wrote and spoke in defense of the use of folklore for better understanding of minorities and under-represented groups."

the Mystic Seaport Museum.

Public schools became a focus for many public folklore projects in the 60s. Motion picture films were used more and more, as equipment and facilities became available in the schools. There was an expressed need for history and everyday life films in social studies curricula. Indiana University Films had anticipated this trend in the 50s with films on square dancing and children's games. After learning my trade by working on these films, I was asked to produce a series of films on life of children in pioneer America. During the late 50s and early 60s, I produced half a dozen films for seventh grade social studies classes, using folklife and local history as a unifying theme.

The method of production for educational films in the Educational Media Department of Indiana University was to use a committee of experts called "educational authors." The source for the public folklore films I produced included educational authors who were historians and folklorists. Richard Dorson and Louis C. Jones served together as authors on my productions, which were filmed at various outdoor museums in the East. This provided for low budget but authentic settings. The media success of the project was reflected in the Cine Golden Eagle Award given to my "Canals Towpaths West" in 1964. One of my biggest problems as an educational film producer was to get academic folklorists and historians to accept the medium as a serious channel for communicating information and ideas. Too often their attitude was, "it's just a film," and the process of film making was not taken seriously.

The New York Folklore Society had always included "folklore-in-the-schools" articles in *New York Folklore Quarterly*. This was due in part to the interests of education students who had been introduced to folklore in college courses taught by Harold Thompson and Louis C. Jones. In the 60s, when the New York seventh grade curriculum was revised to emphasize the cultural history of the State, folklore became an integral part of the material. The concept of folklife, with its concern for the broader oral, material and social expressions of culture, was adopted. Teachers turned to the New York State Historical Association to help them translate the new curriculum into classroom reality. I was part of the planning and teaching of a series of summer seminars for teachers in three of the four new areas of the curriculum content. Educational media were planned and produced by the Historical Society. These included visual materials in folk architecture and immigration. Outside producers also began producing folk materials for the schools. I worked with the Wilson Corporation, for instance, to produce a folksong recordings series on the theme of pioneer transportation.

The folk festival came into its own during the 60s. The National Folk Festival, established by Sarah Gertrude Knox and active for many years, came to New York to celebrate the centennial of the National Grange. As part of the planning committee for that festival, I became more aware of the problems of finding tradition bearers who could perform in a large fes-

tival context. Few authentic traditional performers were experienced with formal stage presentation, and many revivalists were not yet sensitive to the educational role they could perform. However, during this period it was more acceptable to school audiences to use revivalist performers than authentic tradition bearers. Festivals such as the Newport Jazz and Folk Festival were attempting to wed folk performers with the revivalists and writers of "folk" music. Many of the latter had national followings through their recordings and exposure on national television.

A small group of performers, including Jean Ritchie, Frank Proffitt, and others, became known as "professional folk." These performers were from the folk tradition and performed authentic folk expressions of their native group. They also had an ability to communicate to an audience outside of their group and were excellent performers. They followed in the tradition of Bascom Lamar Lunsford, the North Carolina folk performer who established the first folk festivals and taught his Appalachian neighbors how to perform in public. However, they were so few that it became difficult at times to know which festival you were attending. The same performers were usually at every festival. The Newport Festival attempted to broaden interpretation by including information in their program on folklife. Minor Wine Thomas, curator of the Farmers' Museum in Cooperstown, and I wrote a definitive article for their 1966 program on traditional crafts and craftspersons.

The New York festival which attempted to provide an intimate family context was the Fox Hollow Folk Festival in northeastern New York. Members of the Beers family were talented musicians who enjoyed folk and international music and experimented with unusual instrumentation. They invited folk and revivalist performers to their week-long sessions. It was a family festival: the children were provided with games, songs and puppet plays while the adults attended workshops to learn or improve their performance skills. The format became a standard. Bob Beers was sincerely interested in the "good" folk performer, and he encouraged visual folk arts as well by exhibiting the works of such artists as Grandma Moses' son, Forest Moses, as part of the festival.

Of course, the ultimate popular folk festival occurred in New York in 1969 — the Woodstock Festival. The negative and positive effects of this happening on public folklore ware still being assessed after twenty years. One immediate result was the catapulting of the word "folk" to the front pages of newspapers throughout the country. The folklorist has been trying to gain the initiative in the redefinition of the word ever since. The audiences who once enjoyed the popular art performances of traditional music by Richard Dyer Bennet and Susan Reed were suddenly confused in what folk was all about. Sponsors of folklore projects in established public institutions began perceiving folk as "hippies," and withdrew their sup-

port from folk arts projects. Others, however, no longer saw folk materials as stagnant or old-fashioned, but as dynamic statements about changing conditions which related to their everyday lives.

In 1964, the State University of New York established the first master's degree program in Folk Culture in this country. I was fortunate to be appointed to the faculty as Professor of American Folk Culture. We structured the program for students interested in both academic and public folklore. The Cooperstown Graduate Programs in History Museum Studies and American Folk Culture were conducted at the New York State Historical Association. The course content included study of material expressions and folk arts as well as oral and social expression. Outside resources, such as visiting lecturers, field trips and the use of folk tradition-bearers in the classroom, provided students with a broad exposure to the folk field. In addition to preparing students for doctoral programs in folklife, students were prepared to apply their folklore studies in schools, museums and cultural agencies. Most of these students did not think of public programming as a way of making a living until they could teach folklore. First and foremost, they wanted to be public folklorists.

The 1970s

Education programs in New York museums and local youth organizations gained new impetus during the 70s. Local materials for seventh grade social studies were upgraded. Programs in oral tradition collecting and writing (based in part on the Foxfire Project), and arts and crafts were introduced. Students learned to interview local tradition bearers and report to their classmates. In the classroom, the folk found a new audience for their traditions. The folk artist in residence became a standard part of the interpretation of the local culture.

The public folklore graduates of the Cooperstown Graduate Program and similar programs primarily found employment in museum education and research departments or in historic sites, especially outdoor living history programs. Many became directors of local historical societies and museums in New York State, and established projects in oral history and folklife. One graduate conducted a crafts survey of Central New York for the New York Folklore Society, with support from the New York State Council on the Arts. Madison County, New York established a Crafts Archive and craft fair program.

The New York State 4H embarked on a folklore project as part of their cultural programming. William Schwerd, a Cooperstown folklore graduate, developed the program "Heritage and Horizons," based primarily on a folkloristic approach, for local 4H chapters. Programs and workshops for 4H leaders were held throughout the state, and the National 4H adapted some of the material for broader use.

The living history museum movement, including living history farms, outdoor museums, and rural life museums, became professionalized during the 70s. Folklorists began to staff many of these institutions, and were

instrumental in the development of their interpretive programs. Old Beth Page Village, Tarrytown, Old Sturbridge Village and Mystic Seaport were among the area museums which had folklorists conducting folk cultural programs.

Folk festivals were a continuing segment of public programming during the 70s. The Bicentennial observance provided many opportunities for community celebrations through festivals. The state granting agencies supported some of these projects, but frequently there was no provision made for control of content or presentation by folklorists. One privately sponsored celebration was the "Spirit of America Festival," held at Saratoga Racetrack by the New York Racing Association. The week of festivities included a large Fourth of July parade, carnival, Toby tent theatre, and folklore pavilion. The presentations I produced for the folk pavilion included lectures, demonstrations, singing and storytelling by New York tradition bearers, including fiddler Larry Older and singer Sarah Cleveland from the Adirondack Region. It was a surprise to everyone when the tent was completely filled for a lecture on folk architecture.

"The Bicentennial observance provided many opportunities for community celebrations through festivals."

The most influential folk festival of the past two decades has been the annual "Festival on the Mall," at the Smithsonian Institution. The beginnings of this festival point out once again the artificial chasm which separates the "scholar" and the "presenter." Discussions of the role of folklore at the Smithsonian began in the early 60s, with regard to the possible establishment of a position "Curator of Folklife." At that time there was some discussion as to whether folklore was an appropriate scholarly discipline for the Institution. The debate was solved through budget cutbacks and the decision to put folklore in public presentations. Out of these public programs grew the idea of the "National Festival" in Washington. To help bridge the gap between the academic and public folklore factions, a "Scholars Conference" was planned for the opening of the first festival. Folklore scholars from the United States and Europe met with the curator scholars of the Smithsonian to establish a dialogue. Although the heated dialogue did not resolve anything, it did manage to delay the opening performance, which had to wait for us to march down the aisle to take our VIP seats on the front row.

Since then many folklore graduate students have gained their first experience in public folklore by working for the Smithsonian Festival. The decision to feature various areas of the country each year created the expectation that field collection would be conducted in each area of the country in preparation for the festival. Although some fieldwork occurred, the reality was that there was neither enough time nor enough money for such research. Many complained that in place of research a formulaic approach

was being used. Slots were filled with fiddlers, dancers, tall tale tellers whether they represented the region or not. From these experiences, several important guidelines were developed by public folklorists: 1) in planning, let a local event grow out of the community's traditions; 2) keep the event in a folk context as much as possible; and 3) maintain a balance between research and presentation.

The Bicentennial and the preparations for it revived an interest in arts and crafts, especially those from pioneer times. The craft fair took on new life and thousands of crafters came out of the woodwork. Many of the local craft fairs which the folklorist has inherited date from this period. Although many traditional folk artists participated in these local fairs for the church or the fire department, most participants were hobbyists and semi-professional crafters. The identification of this movement with the word "folk," and the commercial success of "folk art," have made the folklorist's task of defining the field to the public even more difficult. The folklorist sometimes tried to help the local sponsors of craft fairs by limiting the types of crafts that could be sold, requiring demonstrations by craftpersons, and pre-judging items for entry in the show. However, the public's insatiable appetite for anything "handmade" was impossible to satisfy. Many public folklorists will not work on craft fairs, and prefer demonstrations and exhibitions where emphasis is placed on controlled interpretation rather than the sale of goods. The goals of the folklorist are noble, but it must not be forgotten that funds raised by crafts fairs help pay for some public folklore programs.

The folk art field took on new dimensions for public folklorists in the 70s. The same economic forces that exploded within the craft field also affected the folk art field. However, another more important factor was at work in folk art: the folk art museum and the art collector. American folk art was "discovered" by art collectors in the 1930s, and their advisors were usually art dealers with training in fine arts. Folk material was described as "naive," "childlike," or "primitive," as judged by the canons of academic and classical art. The aesthetics of folk art were defined in terms which delineated "good" folk art from "bad" folk art. These private collections became part of museum collections in the 40s and 50s, creating a public definition of folk art which was developed by non-folklorists. The real audience for these folk art museums was the middle class museum goer, who was provided with the same type of sanitized art objects as the Grimms had given the reader of folktales.

The "Flowering of America" exhibition was the ultimate statement of the art museum scholars. Their approach was rejected by many field-based, ethnological folk art scholars. With the field collection of folk art in the 60s and 70s new concepts emerged involving what the folk themselves regarded as their art. The field-based researcher asked new questions. What did the folk who made the object call art? Was the material in the museums accepted by the group as their art? For example, were the floral decorations on the graves of some ethnic groups artistic even if the flowers were

made of plastic? Were the yard decorations of some neighborhoods folks art or "tacky?" This debate continued at the Winterthur Conference on Folk Art between the "pink flamingos" and the "musty figs" (the ethnologists and the traditionalists). Today the public folklorist is still faced with interpreting local folk art with outdated theories and definitions based on fine arts and reinforced by formal culture's concepts of folk art rather than interpreting the objects from the creator's point of view.

The 1980s

The 80s may well be looked back upon as the Golden Age of public folklore in New York State. The Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) has provided an active funding source for community folk art programs. In addition to serving the individual artists through apprenticeships and community exposure, NYSCA provides opportunities for presentations, exhibitions and publications for the public. A major contribution has been the provision of staff folklorists to local nonprofit organizations. These professionals conduct research in small regions. Through time, they develop sufficient research to create programs to help local communities understand their folk heritage and the groups which make up their folk traditions. If the staff folklorist model works over the next ten years, each area of the state will have a locally funded resident folklorist to document and interpret the changing folklife.

"NYSCA provides opportuities for presentations, exhibitions, and publications for the public."

The public folklorists working in folk arts projects today are using all of the media channels which have been part of public sector in the past. They have produced radio programs, television videos, motion pictures, slide sets and recordings. Artists have been showcased in exhibitions, concerts, demonstrations, lectures, festivals, craft fairs, school programs, publications and festivals. The important changes from past programming are that: 1) the community is part of the presentations; 2) programs are based on field and historical research; 3) a research archive of local materials is left in the community; and 4) there is continuity in projects from year to year. The public folklorist has had to pay a price for these changes in long hours of work, and frustration with occasional indifference and misunderstanding. Public folklorists have had to become administrators, public relations specialists and political activists for the causes of communities and folk groups.

National programs in public sector folklore have also prospered in the 80s, although not always in the economic sense. The National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities both continue to support folklife projects, and the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress has conducted several regional projects with public

presentations. The national media have folklore superstars for the 80s. Alan Dundes has appeared on the *Today Show,* and Roger Welsch contributes *Sunday Morning* essays on life in the Great Plains. A weekly folklore syndicated newspaper column provides Jan Brunvand with a channel which is the envy of every public folklorist.

The craft show movement has become even more active in the 80s. Every community has at least one show to raise money for a local cause. They have such names as "Shindig-on-the-Green," "Freedom Weekend," "Spirit of America," "Handmade in America," "Threshing Days," "Fun Fest," "Fireman's Carnival," "Oktoberfest," "Fall Festival," "Cheese Festival," and so forth. A person could create a full time position just thinking up names for these events. The craft show has become big business, and crafters have their own associations and national newspapers. The 80s have seen the birth fo the craft fair promoters and bookers who plan regional and national shows. The shows are held in parks, on the streets, and more recently, in shopping malls. Public folklorists cannot compete with this type of staging, nor should they try. A few of our local artists may "graduate" to these national shows and forget their roots for a time; but they will also make a good living at it. However, most of the people with whom we work are not part of this scene. They practice their art as part of their family and community tradition and are dedicated to passing that tradition on to the next generation.

An article such as this is supposed to end with some sort of prediction based on years of experience. I'll pass on that. I've been in the business too long, and have seen too many changes, to predict what tomorrow will bring. I will simply conclude with some words of advice to aspiring public folklorists: 1) keep your goals high; 2) insist on research; 3) stay flexible; and 4) keep plugging away. When I started in folklore forty years ago, nobody was working full time or making a living being a folklorist. I have been fortunate enough to have done both in academic and public folklore — what more could I have asked for? I have had fulfillment as a professor; but my most satisfying moment was after a lecture/demonstration when a lady said, "You've made me proud to live in this county."

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A Story Worth Telling: Publishing in the Public Sector

ELLEN McHALE

Benjamin Botkin in a 1938 address to the Modern Language Association stated, "The most important task confronting the folklorist in America is that of justifying folklore and explaining what it is for, breaking down on the one hand popular resistance to folklore as dead or phony stuff and on the other hand academic resistance to its broader interpretation and utilization" (Feintuch 1988a:263). It is in this spirit championed by Ben Botkin that many of today's public sector folklorists are looking to publishing their research, not only through exhibit catalogs but also through works written especially for general audiences. In New York State, this increased interest in publishing has manifested itself especially since the inception of the New York State Council for the Arts Folk Arts Program in 1985. Since then, many of the public sector publications in the state have taken the form of interpretive exhibit catalogs which are able to stand on their own merits as viable publications. I wish to examine some of the issues which I've found pertinent to publishing small books and pamphlets for general audiences.

Judith McCulloh, in her 1987 presidential address to the American Folklore Society, stated, "Folklorists have to learn to write for wider audiences," (McCulloh 1988:299). The reasons for this, she related, are twofold. The first is economic: publications addressed only to the folklore community won't sell enough copies to justify publication. The second is one which every public sector author who writes for a general audience must confront: how can we reach out to ordinary people to help them understand the traditional forces that divide and bind us?" (McCulloh:300). In my opinion, the mandate of public sector folklore is to take a proactive stance towards traditional culture, to advocate on the part of folk artists, and to bridge understandings between community traditions and a general public who may or may not be familiar with the traditional art forms being presented. What better way to accomplish this than through the print me-

"Today's public sector folklorists are looking to publish works written especially for general audiences."

dia, whether through regional magazines, newspaper columns, or through nonprofit publications? In publishing for a general audience, how can one most effectively produce a work of integrity and accuracy, stripped of academic verbiage yet preserving the standards of the field? One of the inherent conflicts for me in writing is how to reach with the same voice both a general audience and an audience which represents either the community in question and/or my scholarly peers.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has recently commented upon the tensions between academic folklorists and those engaged in public sector work. She writes of the tendency of folklorists to "invent" culture through their mode of academic vocabulary and scholarship, and of the power inherent in representing others (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988:143). This objectification of people and traditions can be accomplished as easily through the published work as through the exhibit or festival. However, the written work disseminated through the general public has the ability to spark an active dialogue and critique among the community which it represents. A folklorist working within a community on a daily basis, realizes most strongly the dangers in the "invention" of paradigms which may sound rational in print. Under the scrutiny of the tradition bearers in question, such constructs may not be as beautiful as the folklorist believes. After disseminating my first publication, a basic discussion of folk arts with twelve case studies of area tradition bearers, I received the comment from one artist that she had never been called a folk artist before and was that what she was?

While perusing a recent publication of the American Folklore Society (Camp 1989) I was struck by the fact that in outlining the different roles that American folklorists assume, the "editor" and "publisher" were represented but not the writer. Is this because the role of "writer" is assumed among members of the academy? At a 1988 gathering of public sector folklorists in New York State the complaint was voiced that those in the public sector did not have time to write, either for an academic audience or for the general public. Contrary to those experiencing the demands of the academy to publish one's research, public sector folklorists find that their contemplative time is at the minimum and that the funding cycle of most folklore fieldwork and presentation is too short to prove conducive to publishing. However, public sector folklorists *should* find the time to publish. They can contribute not only works pertaining to public sector's own intellectual tradition (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988:149) and the reflective examination of the public sector enterprise, but also works which aid in cross-cultural understanding and regional awareness of an area's history and traditions. One result of the dichotomy between the academy and the public sector is the gap between academic scholarship and public presentation, creating a situation in which scholars talk only to scholars. This gap has not always existed. As Burt Feintuch has pointed out (Feintuch 1988b:70) the interest in folklore was widespread in the late nineteenth century, with popular publications directed to the educated public. Folklorists George

Korson and Vance Randolph directed their publication toward nonspecialist readers and were able to make their livings as writers (Feintuch 1988b:72). Today, with increased public sector publishing which has integrity and a firm basis in scholarship, the current gap between academic and public sector research can effectively be shortened.

When starting out to plan a publication in the folk arts, the first consideration should be the feasibility of the project. What are the goals of publishing? Is publishing the best format to get your ideas across? The interpretive models which public sector presentations take are various, limited only by imagination. With the multiplicity of presentation formats available, one need not look to publishing as the best option for the presentation of folklore research. In my own work as a public sector folklorist I have chosen to produce publications in two different situations. My first publication for the Rensselaer County Council for the Arts (a multi-arts center in Troy, New York), served as a basic introduction to folk arts and was designed to reach a large audience. Cultural encouragement was a motivation. In that vein one can look at the publication as an education tool and as an audience builder for a program which at that point was in its infancy.

The second publication produced by the Rensselaer County Council for the Arts was developed for both a practical and scholarly use. Its subject matter was traditional square dancing and square dance musicians in Rensselaer County. It was intended to disseminate information about square dancing as an important artistic and social activity in the county. Based on documentation of square dance musicians and traditional square dances, the booklet included a short social historical study of square dancing in the region and then presented musicians and square dance callers in short biographies. It was designed to function as a short scholarly article on a particular topic. The booklet also served a practical function. I wished to present a program on square dancing in the form of a participatory dance. Desiring to include interpretation but unable to figure out a non-intrusive way to present interpretation at a community-based social event, I decided to distribute a booklet to all participants. They could thus experience the square dance as an event and digest the interpretive materials later.

Once one has decided to publish, one must develop a concept for the publication. The subject should be intellectually and visually rich enough to produce a work which will be interesting and marketable to the general reader. The format for the publication is also a consideration. Is the book to be a collection of invited essays or is it to have one author? Will it take the form of a small pamphlet or booklet or will it be designed as a longer work.

After deciding on a concept, the hard work begins. Research must be conducted and an outline developed for the publication. This is perhaps the longest period and the one in which I usually find that my goals for the publication far exceed the time and/or money allocated to the project. During the research phase I consult with tradition bearers regarding the

accuracy of my statements. I request permission to include references to them and their work. Often they can supply photographs which will serve as illustrations for the subject matter. In this time of researching and developing the publication, it is important to think visually as well as verbally.

Once a first draft is written it is useful to distribute the writing to others, especially those not trained in folklore. Since public sector publications are directed toward a general audience it is important to create a work which is accurate and valuable, while at the same time understandable to someone with little experience of folklore. A non-academic reader can be extremely helpful in pointing out vague and wordy passages.

"Design is the first step in marketing."

I also find it useful to work with an editor who can critique the work and make suggestions as to style and content. An editor is crucial in pulling together a collection of invited essays, since these essays should be as consistent as possible with each other. Even if the publication is solely the work of one author, having an editor is a benefit. An editor can find inconsistencies more easily than the author can.

Once one has a completed manuscript, the written work should be taken to a designer to create a visual image for the publication. The designer can decide on page layout, typeface, and cover design. In other words, the designer will develop a "look" for the publication which will be inviting to the public. Design is the first step in marketing and will be an important factor in the success of the publication once it is ready for distribution. One can produce a fascinating work, but if it is not visually appealing it will have only a limited impact.

Marketing is an entirely separate issue from scholarship and one in which many authors of public sector folklore materials fall short. I am loath to think of the many publications which still sit on storage shelves because of an organization's inability to market them. For the publications I have written, I have not exceeded small print runs of five hundred to one thousand and I have been able to distribute this amount by relying upon the membership of the sponsoring organizations. Others in the field of publishing suggest exploring retail outlets, serializing the publication to appear in a local magazine or newspaper, prepublication sales for the book, and standard devices of book promotion and advertising. Publications can also be keyed into local civic events such as anniversary celebrations for an area. It is useful to know one's audience and projected market in advance so as to maximize the publication's impact.

In producing a publication I cannot stress too strongly the value of relying upon professionals, whether photographers, designers, or editors. As an academic folklorist, one is trained as an ethnographer and a scholar. Perhaps one also has photography skills. However, publishing is not an area which is taught to graduate folklore students; nor should it be. When faced with the monumental task of creating a quality work which is both

visually and intellectually pleasing, I have found it increasingly satisfying to work with photographers and graphic designers who can supply the expertise which I lack.

With the presentation of traditional arts to a general audience one hopes to encourage a public recognition of the value of folkloric expression within a certain region. One strives to bridge the gap between academic folklore scholarship and applied folklore. However, the nature of much public sector work is ephemeral: a festival which lasts for eight hours, an exhibit which is presented during eight weeks, or a concert which is over in an evening. Publications, even those with a limited distribution, can help to lengthen the impact of one's work over years' time. Two years after the Rensselaer County Council for the Arts' publishing of "Honor Your Partners: The Square Dance Tradition in Rensselaer County" I am still receiving telephone calls and comments about the work. Its influence has far exceeded the public program which served as its companion.

NOTES

This article benefitted greatly from a workshop on publishing held by the Federation of Historic Services, Troy, NY on December 12, 1988. Preliminary presentation of some of the ideas expressed in this article was made at the 1989 New York State Folk Arts Round Table held in Syracuse, NY, January 1989.

1. Suggestions provided by Diana S. Waite of Mount Ida Press, Troy, NY. 12.12.88.

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Folk Arts on the Radio: Issues in the Production of "Old Traditions — New Sounds"

REBECCA S. MILLER

Since its inception in 1970, public radio has offered an alternative to commercial radio.[1] In general, public radio stations across the country are supported by a variety of sources, including federal and state grants and listener donations. While attracting a significantly smaller audience than does commercial radio, public radio nevertheless serves an estimated 11.8 million[2] listeners nationwide via more than four hundred stations through the satellite and other systems of distribution. Public radio provides a forum for in-depth news reporting with a more humanistic edge than found in commercial radio, as well as programming that includes experimental audio pieces, non-mainstream popular, ethnic, and folk music, radio drama, and documentaries on a myriad of topics.

Public radio is thus an excellent format for the presentation of educational and entertaining ethnographic documentaries and offers a potentially enormous and diverse listenership. Carriage of folk and ethnic programming is, on the whole, assured since most public and non-commercial radio stations allot some time each week for either locally produced or nationally distributed shows featuring traditional and/or folk music. The growing interest in these genres among listeners — as evidenced by the popularity of such nationally distributed folk and traditional music programs as "A Prairie Home Companion," "Mountain Stage," and others — paves the way for further presentations on other aspects of traditional culture.

"Public radio provides a forum for in-depth news reporting with a humanistic edge."

"Old Traditions — New Sounds"

The idea of using radio to present traditional ethnic music first occurred to me in 1986 when I was the Director of Folk Arts Programs at the Irish Arts Center in New York City. One of my projects was to organize a series of folk arts events in the outer boroughs of New York City. It was the mid-

dle of February, and I was on the phone, attempting to line up Irish traditional musicians to perform at a *ceili* (dance party). I was late in my quest for musicians because the *ceili* was scheduled for a few days after St. Patrick's Day and Irish musicians are generally booked months in advance during this holiday period. I persevered and rang Matty Connolly, an outstanding Irish uilleann piper.

As I had feared, Matty already had another job on the night of the *ceili*. Always curious to know what was happening in New York City's Irish music scene, I asked him about it.

"Oh, you wouldn't be interested, Becky. It wouldn't be the traditional music now," he answered.

I pressed him for details and discovered that the flip side of Matty's musical personality was as an electric bass player in an Irish-American Showband at the Tower View, a popular dance hall in Queens. He had been playing this specialized blend of country-western songs, American pop and rock, and popular Irish songs for nearly three decades. The lead guitarist in Matty's group was Martin Mulhaire, who I knew to be one of the finest traditional Irish button accordionists in the United States.

Greatly intrigued, I started to gather interviews with both Matty and Martin. In these interviews, we discussed their motivations for expanding and diversifying their musical lives by moving away from their native traditions in favor of a more contemporary, hybrid musical style. Both men emigrated from Ireland to New York in the late 1950s. Upon arrival they found that there was virtually no audience for traditional music and thus, only infrequent opportunities to perform this music. Like many other newly arrived Irish, both men sought to create a musical and social niche in their new country and did so, in part, through becoming involved with Irish showband music. Economic factors also played a role. Both men coincidentally worked construction as carpenters but also needed weekend jobs. In order to work weekends as musicians, they had to adapt their musical talents to what would sell.

This pattern of acculturation and assimilation is hardly restricted to Irish musicians and extends in various degrees to folk artists from a variety of ethnic groups. At this juncture, I had a theme, the folk artists, and great musical possibilites, but how to best present it?

Producing a concert or an album featuring both the traditional and popular music styles as performed by these folk artists did not seem viable. Such approaches would have only limited audience appeal, as the topic necessarily dealt with two dissimilar and frequently unrelated musics and presumably, entirely different audiences. In addition, the maintenance of older traditions and simultaneous experimentation with newer musical genres presented interesting and important historical and sociological issues that could not be adequately addressed in a concert or album format.

Another option was a film or video. Aside from being an expensive proposition, the filming process itself can be intrusive and frequently requires a lot of equipment and technicians. Radio documentation, on the

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other hand, can be done with just one and at the most, two producers who actually record events, music sessions, and interviews. Radio, like film and television, also carries with it the prestige of mass media and this helps with gaining an entree into a community. Thus, audio documentaries seemed the appropriate vehicle and public radio the best route.

With the help of the World Music Institute in New York City as the project sponsor, thus was born "Old Traditions — New Sounds," a thirteen-part series of half-hour performance documentaries for public radio. With a total budget of over one million dollars, "Old Traditions — New Sounds" is fully funded by major grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Folk Arts Program of New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York Council for the Humanities.

"Old Traditions — New Sounds" profiles different ethnic folk artists who, in addition to being masters of their native traditional music, have also gone on to learn and sometimes incorporate newer, populr American sounds into their repertoire and performance style. In a larger sense, "Old Traditions — New Sounds" examines the immigrant experience, the influence of popular American culture on immigrant traditions, and the inherent vitality of the folk arts in the face of social change. Each program contains interviews with the featured folk artist and his/her family and musical associates; recordings of live musical performances and those made in studio settings; recordings of archival music; ambient sounds recorded in the neighborhoods and environment where the folk artists live, work, and perform; and a narration read by folk revivalist/songwriter Judy Collins, who is the host of the series.

The thirteen programs in "Old Traditions — New Sounds" document the musics of immigrant and second-generation folk artists from throughout the United States. Part one of the series includes audio portraits of a traditional Yiddish *(klezmer)* clarinetist — Sid Beckerman of Brooklyn, N.Y. — who also plays standard American dance music on the saxophone; Southern Italian traditional singer Carmine Ferraro, now of Westerly, Rhode Island, who also performs pop songs with an Italo-American band; Armenian clarinetist Soren Baronian of New York City who incorporates jazz elements into his traditional Middle Eastern musical styles; Irish button accordionist-turned electric guitarist Martin Mulhaire; and South African folk and pop vocalist Thuli Dumakude.

Part two of the series profiles recent immigrants to the United States such as Korean *kayagum* player Sang Won Park, who also performs contemporary music with such avant-garde performance artists as Laurie Anderson; Simon Shaheen, a Palestinian violinist and oud player from Haifa who merges his native Arab musical tradition with western classical influences; and others.

During the course of production of "Old Traditions — New Sounds," I have found that the process of making radio documentaries is a dual challenge involving all of the usual pressures of ethnographic field work

plus additional technical concerns. There is frequently an underlying tension between the normal process of gathering ethnographic and cultural information and the need for broadcast-quality audio. Both ethnographic and technical concerns must be met in order to produce a strong documentary piece, and conflicts do occur during the course of audio production. In addition, marketing and distribution realities must also be faced.

Entree Into the Community

As in all field work, gaining an entree into the community is the first step in documentary productions. Community participation and enthusiasm for the documentary process is essential and facilitates the logistical and technical coordination needed to complete the project. That public radio is the media and thus a potential for wide exposure and publicity is a great help in gaining immediate access into the community to be documented. Gaining the trust of the members of the community is another matter altogether.

When approaching a community or folk artist regarding their participation in an audio documentary, it is helpful to offer them a cassette copy of an already completed radio piece. This immediately clarifies what elements go into the making of a documentary, the style of production, and the producer's sensitivity and approach to the traditions of that culture. Additionally, it is important to relate basic information such as the overall intent of the documentary and the names of any production personnel who might also come in contact with the community during the course of production. It is helpful to mention the host of the program or series, especially if the host is a celebrity or otherwise well known to the community. It is necessary to be clear about the type of help the folk artist/community will be asked to give in terms of planning, access, and other considerations. Finally, it is important for the producer to ask permission of the community before recording anything — celebrations, interviews, and occurrences at insider events.

It is important to be clear at the outset about artists' fees (how much, to whom, and when) as well as plans for broadcast and distribution of the completed documentary. The extent of the folk artist's or community's rights over any music and interviews used in the production must also be discussed. (Generally, proprietary rights over the music/interviews are retained by the folk artist or community, while rights to the completed documentary piece are retained by the producer and producing entity. It is helpful to have a sample copy of a release form which details these rights.) Finally, the producer and folk artists must come to an agreement regarding future use of music recorded for the purposes of the documentary. (I generally give the musicians permission to use any music recorded for the documentary for their privately or commercially produced cassettes, albums, or compact discs.)

As in any ethnographic venture, gaining the trust of the community comes with time, although some communities are more open than others.

While some may outwardly approve of being featured in a documentary and will give permission for the project to begin, difficulties may nevertheless arise in the early stages of gathering material. An example of this was when I encountered only a lukewarm reception by the members of a Puerto Rican *casita* (social club) in the South Bronx during the production of a ten minute radio module. Although the senior members of the community had given express permission for myself and several other folklorists to be present during a day-long community celebration, the atmosphere was decidedly not inviting.

After I had gathered a few interviews, some music, and ambient sound, it became obvious that my presence was too intrusive and I decided to quit early. At that point, I began playing with the children at the *casita* — perhaps ten or twelve of them ranging in age from three to twelve. I "interviewed" them and they "interviewed" me. I recorded them singing popular songs, played back what they had sung, erased "mistakes," and re-recorded. During this time, I also recorded some of the children singing traditional *plena* lyrics which they learned from their parents as well as recordings of children playing the *pandereta*, or hand-held drum which is used to accompany *plena*. Some of these recordings, incidentally, were eventually used in the final production.

"It was obvious that my presence was too intrusive."

The parents walked in and out of the room, keeping an eye on things and sometimes listening to what we had recorded. From time to time, some of the parents encouraged the children to sing a specific song or talk about a particular anecdote or topic. It was obvious that the kids and I were having a lot of fun, and over the course of the afternoon, the parents began to warm up to me. In the late afternoon, several of the mothers brought us enormous plates of food. By evening, when *plena* singing and playing by the adults began anew, there was none of the awkwardness or discomfort that I had felt earlier. I was able to record a tremendous amount of outstanding *plena* and *bomba* music and song during the evening with no problem and wound up exchanging phone numbers with several of the *casita's* members for future interviews.

Other potentially awkward situations arise where the community might be pleased to participate in the creation of an audio documentary but the presence of an outsider who is obviously recording might be distracting. For example, recording ambience inside a church service or during a sacred ritual, while neither forbidden nor frowned upon by the community, nevertheless necessitates discretion on the part of the producer. A subtle way to record this type of event is to keep the tape recorder in a sound bag over the shoulder with a microphone discretely emerging from either side of the bag and making sure that the bag (and microphones) are held very still while recording. For headphones (which should always be worn when doing any type of recording), I've found that a set of small, Walkman-

type headphones suffices in these instances and is not too noticeable. Recording levels can be monitored by peeking into the bag. This technique is also excellent when recording street ambience in high-crime neighborhoods where it is inadvisable to flash expensive sound equipment around. The only visible clues are the tops of the microphones (usually unidentifiable as such especially if equipped with foam wind guards) and the headphones, which have become part of our national fashion anyway, and so do not stand out as unusual or valuable.

Issues in Production

Ethnographic documentaries for public radio can generally range from modules (usually 3 to 10 minute pieces) to half-hour, hour, and two-hour performance productions. The length of the documentary depends on several factors including the actual subject matter as well as marketability to stations in the public radio network. For example, a portrait of a Puerto Rican lacemaker in which the only sound elements available — aside from actuality, interviews, and narration — are the sound of bobbins tapping against each other might make a better 5 to 10 minute module than an hour-long documentary. On the other hand, a rarely documented style of traditional music, performed in a unique setting (wedding, ritual, or other celebration), along with colorful and thoughtful actuality, would certainly warrant an hour's treatment.

In the early stages of planning "Old Traditions — New Sounds," I chose to make half-hour programs primarily because half-hour segments seemed manageable and ample. I have since realized that each program could have been an hour long, given the complexity of the issues raised in each program as well as first rate performances of two entirely separate musical genres. Further, some public radio stations prefer to program hour-long presentations, so hour-long programs are potentially more marketable as it is easier to incorporate them into the station's weekly schedule.

"For documentaries, it is preferable to use recordings of live performances."

In producing "Old Traditions — New Sounds," I have found that working on two or three programs simultaneously is both cost and time efficient. Generally, it takes about two months to collect interviews, record live musical performances, and gather sound ambience. Two more months of production are generally devoted to script writing, working with the academic experts and technical consultants for each program, gathering archival musical recordings, editing the actualities and music, recording narration, and finally, mixing the elements of each program together into a cohesive whole with a sound engineer.

Many of the folk artists in "Old Traditions — New Sounds" have not been documented on recordings to date and any music that is needed —

be it the traditional repertoire or the more modern style -- has to be recorded either in a performance situation or in a studio. For documentaries, it is preferable to use recordings of live performances — weddings, parties, dances, and other social and community events — for a number of reasons. First, background sound ambience is essential for adding context to the performance and for "putting the listener on location." Secondly, non-professional musicians (especially traditional artists) sometimes freeze up in what can be intimidating interiors of a recording studio, since they do not have an audience to play to. In contrast, live recordings where an audience is watching, dancing, and generally interacting with the folk artists result in a much more lively and realistic sound.

High quality musical recordings — preferably stereo — are essential for use in radio documentaries. Aside from the aesthetic benefits, I have found that these recordings are also useful to the featured folk artists who later can use them for inclusion on cassettes and/or albums. To gather recordings from a small ensemble in a relatively stable environment (small concert setting or music session), I use two Shoepps microphones and a Sony TCD-5M tape recorder. For a larger ensemble, I hire a sound recordist who uses a portable mixing board and digital recording equipment.

Interviews make documentaries come alive. I strive for a "radio verite" style where the artist is allowed to speak for him/herself as much as possible with minimal scripted narration. In general, I have found that with the featured folk artist, doing two or three interviews of about two hours each over the course of several months gets the best results. This way, there is time to transcribe the interviews and ascertain what issues have been raised and what information is still needed. Recuperative time for the folk artist is important too. Many find these interview sessions draining, as they are asked to recall difficult issues towards which they may have ambivalent feelings. Interviews with family members, leaders of the community, and musical associates are generally limited to a single interview of one or two hours.

In general, I record interviews using a Sony TCD-5M tape recorder and an Electro-Voice RE 635A omni-directional microphone. I prefer to record interviews using two-track mono, but single-track mono recording also works well.

At the end of every interview, it is important to record several minutes of room ambience, or the sound of the "quiet" room. This ambience is helpful when editing interviews as it can be used to provide a constant bed of background sound underneath a tape cut. Also, if needed, room ambience can be used during the final mix as needed to ensure smooth and subtle transitions between elements.

Interviews should be held wherever the folk artist feels comfortable, usually in a quiet room in his or her home. Apartments and houses can be amazingly noisy. Refrigerators often need to be unplugged, steam radiators closed, and televisions elsewhere in the house turned down. A quiet environment is important because it is difficult to make smooth and un-

noticeable edits in interviews with a lot of backgound and random sounds. Also, while noisy interviews add location and color, too much uncontrolled ambience creates complications during the final mixing process. In the extreme case, this can result in a muddy-sounding production.

There is a point, however, where one must sacrifice a completely quiet background for the sake of the interviewee's comfort. Many folk artists are initially shy or uncomfortable during an interview. Altering their environment for the sake of pristine recordings can exacerbate their reticence. For example, in creating a documentary on Carmine Ferraro, a traditional singer from Calabria, Italy, I began by interviewing him in his kitchen. He was uncomfortable there and as a result, the interviews were nearly useless. Ultimately, I discovered the best way to interview him was to carry my tape recorder and microphone with me at all times and turn it on whenever a conversational situation presented itself. As a result, I "interviewed" Mr. Ferraro while he worked in his back yard; in relatively quiet bars and lounges near his home; and in other semi-noisy, but neutral environments. This way, I gathered interview material that was not quite an audio engineer's dream, but was nevertheless rich in substance.

On the other hand, there is an enormous difference between annoying and potentially ruinous background noice and "sound ambience." Sounds from an outdoor festival or the chatter of children in a neighborhood park add color and offer an alternate texture to that created by spoken word and music. This type of sound is best used when mixed into the final production underneath spoken narration or interviews or on its own to create a transition. Collecting ambience has taken me to Manhattan's Central Post Office to record the monotony of postal sorting machines; to an outdoor beer garden where elderly Armenian men play backgammon and chat; to lively parties at West Coast Romanian nightclubs; and to musty basements housing enormous wooden casks of wine which offer the bubbling sounds of fermentation.

Ambient sound should be recorded in stereo is possible, using either one stereo microphone or two mono microphones. An important trick in collecting sound ambience is to record as many minutes of unadulterated sound as possible. Invariably, the moment the tape recorder is shut off is the moment that a wonderfully descriptive and colorful sound or event takes place. An exceptionally painful example of this was when I was recording the sounds of the church service prior to the beginning of the Italian-American *Giglio* Feast in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Thinking that I had enough of the organ and choir, I pressed down the pause button on my tape recorder. In less than ten seconds, the choir and organ finished the piece and immediately, without missing a beat, an enormous brass band blasted the church interiors with the raucous and gleeful *Giglio* Feast Song. It was a missed choice audio moment — one that so simply and clearly presented the complimentary roles of the church and popular ethnic culture in the maintenance of this annual event.

The challenge to an ethnographic audio documentarian is to create

pieces which grab the listener, maintain interest, educate, and inform. The ideal ratio of music and ambient sound to spoken word (actuality and narration) is currently a point of contention among radio producers and station managers. Today's trend in public radio is to maintain a balance of nearly 70 to 80 percent music and sound to 20 to 30 percent spoken word, since it is frequently assumed that the general public's ever-shortening attention span necessitates more background music and fewer ideas. This is a disturbing trend because it implies that documentaries in general may ultimately not be able to compete as well as performance programs in the public radio marketplace. I have more faith in the ability of radio audiences to listen and process spoken thoughts and ideas: I tend to keep the ratio of music to sound to spoken word closer to fifty-fifty.

Many other genres of folk art translate well into audio. Percussive dance styles, storytelling and other forms of narrative folklore, certain folk foodways and folk crafting processes, and many other folk art forms can be presented as "audio portraits" through the creative use of sound ambience, descriptive interviews, and narration. Most circumstances can be described using sound. It only requires a re-working of the producer's imagination to "see" things in terms of sound.

Issues in Marketing and Distribution

Distribution of completed programs to public radio stations is achieved in a number of ways. The completed series can be offered directly to National Public Radio or American Public Radio. These entities will distribute the series through their station networks. Independent producers can distribute programs via the Public Radio Satellite System which connects over three hundred stations nationwide.[3] Additionally, tape distribution to public radio stations that do not have satellite downlink capability is availabe via the National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB). Producers can also distribute tapes to selected stations directly.

Many hours of independently produced radio programming are offered to public radio stations via satellite, but the stations have only a limited number of available broadcast hours. Thus it is not enough to produce documentaries of high quality and offer them free[4] to radio stations; they must also be marketed and publicized.

One means of marketing is to have a celebrity or known name host the production. Although the host's only real role is to read the scripted narration, he/she ultimately becomes closely associated with production. The addition of a "name" attracts station managers to broadcast the program or series and attracts listeners to tune in.

A public radio host should have some experiences in voice-over work (reading script) and should have a nice voice quality. It helps if the host has some connection, however remote, to the material presented in the documentary. Care must be taken to assure that an inaccurate impression of traditional culture is not made by attaching a celebrity's name to the documentary. The content of the program and careful scripting should be

able to clearly define what folk arts and tradition are despite the presence of a host from outside the realm of folk culture. The issue of false association is minor given the certain reality of the need to be able to compete for national air-time.

Other marketing and promotion techniques include the creation of a direct mail brochure advertising the upcoming production to public radio stations; packets that supply user-stations (those which have decided to air the production) with materials for local promotion; tele-marketing that targets major stations nationwide as well as community and ethnic stations that would be especially interested in the subject. Notices of broadcast times of the production can be sent out via the electronically transmitted Direct Access Communication System (DACS) which connects public radio stations nationwide.

* * *

The presentation of folk arts via public radio documentaries offers a wide, general audience the dual opportunity to learn about and be entertained by these vital expressions of cultural identity. Equally important, both the process of creating and the subsequent broadcast of a documentary serve to reaffirm the importance of these traditions to the featured folk artist and/or community. Through the creative use of words and sound, folk arts traditions throughout the country can be presented in a real context and thus remain relevant to the originating community. And through the public radio network, these traditions can be shared with other communities, helping to foster the growing awareness of folklife and folklore nationwide.[5]

NOTES

1. The Public Broadcasting Act was passed by Congress in 1967, thereby paving the way for the development and formation of the public radio system and National Public Radio in 1970. See *Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 1988 Annual Report*.

2. According to Arbitron, a private audience research company, public radio listenership has increased from 4.4 million in 1978 to 11.8 million in 1988. From *Public Broadcasting Statistics In Brief*. Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Spring, 1989.

3. The Public Radio Satellite System enables stations, independent producers, and syndicators to distribute programs directly to public radio stations as part of the Extended Program Service (EPS). Reaching the public radio stations from 19 locations nationwide, the satellite transmits both NPR and independently produced programs 24 hours a day. Producers buy time on the satellite and in addition, receive marketing advice and materials from NPR as part of the service. For further information, contact National Public Radio, Distribution Division, 2025 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

4. Although a few syndicated programs are offered to public radio stations for a fee, most independently produced shows are free. The competition for air-time on public radio stations is stiff and few stations pay for programs that do not already have an established listenership.

5. "Old Traditions — New Sounds" will air in late 1990. Cassette copies of the programs will also be made available to public institutions and to the general public. For further information, air dates, or cassette copies, write to Rebecca Miller, World Music Institute, 109 West 27th Street, Suite 9C, New York, NY 10001.

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The Making of "God's Mother is the Morning Star:" A Case Study in Videotaping an Elderly Folk Artist

KAREN D. LUX

Video and film documentaries are illusory productions. They give the impression of realism — of having captured events as they really occurred. Little evidence remains in the finished product to reveal that it is a construct — that the filmmaker has put together bits and pieces, images and words recorded at different times and in different places, to form an artifice that symbolizes rather than replicates its subject. Few filmmakers talk about the process of filmmaking, the story behind the story they created, the problems they encountered and how they reacted to them. However, if this were done more often, it is likely that filmmakers could learn from each other's experiences.

Documenting the elderly presents a unique set of challenges to the filmmaker. The following is an account of my experience as a folklorist working with a filmmaker on a video documentary about Joseph Mender, a ninety-year-old folk artist who lives in the southern Finger Lakes area of upstate New York.

Joseph Mender was born in Lithuania in 1897. He came to the United States in 1913 and worked as a tailor in Brooklyn for more than fifty years. He retired to a small town in upstate New York in the 1960s. I met Joe in January of 1985 while working as guest curator on a regional folk art exhibit for the Schweinfurth Art Center in Auburn, NY. I had sent out flyers to local cultural institutions seeking leads for folk artists whose work might be displayed in the exhibit. In response, Judith Parker, a friend of Joe's, had sent me a Polaroid snapshot of six colorfully painted and intricately carved walking sticks he had made. Soon afterward, I made the first of many visits to him. As I got to know him, I became more and more fascinated with him: his extensive artwork, his home, his life story, his religious and political beliefs. I soon saw that all these elements formed a coherent whole and that to understand one element, his artwork, it was necessary to understand the other facets of his life as well. An exhibit featuring several of his canes would not do him justice. The following year I approached filmmaker Peter Biella with the proposal that we make a video

documentary about Joe.

Peter's reaction to my proposal was, "How fascinating. You rarely see documentaries on subjects so old." We quickly found out why. Joe's advanced age presented many unforeseen complications in the video's production. These complications extended production time, added to our expenses and caused stress for all involved. The production required great patience and faith on the part of Joe and ingenuity and persistence on the part of the crew to counter these problems. Ultimately it was Joe's belief in the project that allowed its completion.

The first time I visited Joe, Judith came with me to introduce us. Since Joe did not have a telephone, she had made the arrangements during a previous visit with him. We drove about ten miles from Judith's home to the town in which Joe lived. Making a quick U-turn at a rise just beyond the one intersection in town, I parked at the side of the road, behind a sign that requested, "Drive Slowly to See Small Town U.S.A." We followed traces of tire tracks that led down a grassy slope to an old, asphalt-shingled building, beyond which was a chain-link fence and a graveyard. Judith told me, "This is the old schoolhouse." She opened the outer door of the foyer and knocked on the inner door, calling "Joe? Joe?" I heard a heavily accented "Yeah, Yeah, in a minute." Presently the door opened and a white-haired man with a big mustache in a plaid flannel shirt, heavy wool pants and suspenders greeted us. "This is the woman I told you about, Joe." He ushered us in, offered us chairs and we began to talk.

"Nailed to the head of the bed was a small painted icon of the Holy Mother."

Joe's house contained two large rooms with several smaller rooms to one side. He lived in the smaller of the two main rooms. This room contained his bed, dresser, a sofa, eating table and chair, a child-sized desk from the schoolroom days, a sink, a shelf for dishes, a gas stove, and a coal stove which heated the room. In one of the smaller adjoining rooms was his refrigerator. A heavy stuffed rocking chair for guests occupied the center of the room. Encircling the room, at about shoulder height, were colorful prints of dramatic scenes from operas. On the wall above the head of the bed were posted a series of eighteen ornate prints of medieval illuminations. Nailed to the head of the bed, a small painted icon of the Holy Mother gazed down on the pillow below. Joe had rigged a system of strings by which he could turn the lights on and off without leaving his bed. The eating table was cluttered with books, old Lithuanian newspapers, cookie tins and a box of dog biscuits. In the corner next to the front door stood an aluminum trash can which held about twenty walking sticks. The house was orderly but betrayed Joe's neglect of housecleaning.

The larger of the two main rooms Joe called his "museum." The walls were filled with prints of various types: icons and other painting with re-

ligious themes; landscapes; a print of the massacre of Kraziai, a famous nineteenth century slaughter of Lithuanian Catholics by Cossacks; a painting of Joe's parents; and a photographic portrait of Joe as a teenager. Lining the walls below the prints were shelves and cases full of books, in Lithuanian, Russian, Polish and English. Their subjects ranged from history to anthropology to evolutionary theory. Along one wall was posted a twelve foot long "Chronology of the World," yellowed with age, which began with Adam and Eve and ended with early twentieth century national leaders. One corner of the room was sectioned off with aluminum sheeting supported by two by fours to make a separate room. It contained a bathtub, a safe, and Joe's accordion. Clustered in the center of the room, were a small electric organ, an old sewing machine and a refrigerator. A total of three refrigerators stood in the room, none of them plugged in. I found out later that Joe used them as fireproof storage for this most valuable books and records. To the side of this room were a "Boys" room and a "Girls" room, from the schoolhouse days, each an indoor privy.

I sat in the guest chair. Judith and Joe sat at the table. We chatted for two hours that day. He showed me his canes and answered my questions. He talked about the various images in the canes. Some of the canes were covered with ink drawings of people: friends, family members, generic characters from village life in Lithuania such as a priest, a soldier, a gentleman. One cane was covered with colorful portraits of kings, princes and military heroes from Lithuanian history, arranged chronologically from the tenth to the sixteenth century. Other canes were intricately carved top to bottom with geometric patterns. Joe told me that the geometric designs came from weaving and embroidery patterns his mother and sisters used to use. On many of the canes, knots were carved into animal or grotesque human faces. Carved or written onto nearly all the canes was the date they were made, Joe's name, and his birthday, a testimony to his strong sense of history.

At Judith's prompting he told me stories about events in his life. Images on the canes reflected the people and ideas most influential in his life. "My mother's father taught me to carve sticks," he told me. "When I was a boy in Lithuania I watched the cattle. I made the sticks then, to pass the time. Now I need them to walk." Joe's mother farmed the land while his father worked as a game warden at a nearby estate. Later his father made two trips to America to find work, staying several years each time. He brought Joe and his brother to Brooklyn when they were 16 and 17 to escape conscription into the Russian army.

Within half an hour of my arrival that first visit, Joe began to talk about religion. At the time, Judith was a fundamentalist Christian. She had taken him to several Sunday services at her church. Joe exclaimed, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! That is all we hear there! But how can there be a God Father without a God Mother?" "You mean the Virgin Mary?" I asked. "No. I'll show you." He pulled out a brightly painted cane. At the top of it was the face of an old bearded man. Over his head, as either a halo or a crown,

was a golden triangle made of stars. "This, God Father," he told me. Below this figure was the radiant face of a woman, and before her, the globe of the world. "God Mother," he explained. "If there is a Father there must be a Mother! In everything there is a male and a female or there is no life. Birds, flowers, fish also. Here there are cherry trees, every year I see flowers but never any fruit. I asked myself, 'Why no cherries?' I could not understand it. Then I found in book, science book . . . the wind brings the seed . . . the trees need a male and female too. There is a male and a female in everything." His greatest regret in life, he told me, is that he did not marry; it is against God's will to be single.

He called this cane his prayer cane. Below the images of God Mother and God Father, spiraling down around the cane in quarter inch print, was Joe's prayer to God in Lithuanian. The prayer begins with Joe's version of the words to the Sign of the Cross: "In the name of the Great Father, the Great Mother and the whole of Nature . . ." The prayer goes on to praise Jesus as the "first to bring to poor people an equal life and equal rights." The great "isms" of the world, the prayer continues, political systems as well as religions, are only attempts to dominate society and the minds of the people. "Learning and knowledge are the true teachings of God the Father and the Great Holy Mother." For Joe, education is the means to carrying out God's will on Earth. Without Joe's belief in the importance of education, the video production would not have been completed.

I was fascinated by his philosophy. I thought his canes were beautiful, and I asked him if I could put them in my exhibit. Joe was hesitant. He did not consider his sticks to be art. "I wanted to be an artist," he said, "and a rich woman in my town in Lithuania offered to pay for my schooling, but my mother wanted me to be a priest. 'You be priest or you be nothing,' that's what she said." He found it hard to understand why I would want to put the canes in an exhibition. "Why would someone want to look at these?" he asked. I spent a long time trying to convince him that he was an artist, that one did not have to go to school to be an artist, and that there were many people who would want to see his work. He remained unconvinced and would not give an answer by the end of the visit. I felt that he was flattered, and wanted to believe me, but was skeptical. I sensed that he thought there was a catch, that perhaps I was trying to deceive him in some way. He seemed to be waiting to see what it was I really wanted. Nevertheless he seemed to welcome my suggestion of a second visit.

I visited Joe about every other week over the next few months. I brought art history books with pictures of various types of folk art, from Lithuanian wood carving to the paintings of Grandma Moses. I told him why his work was important, showed him that other people were interested in seeing it. And he talked more and more about himself, his life history, his beliefs. Occasionally I taped him. We became friends. Gradually his incredulity disappeared in the face of my persistence and he agreed to allow me to borrow several canes for the exhibit.

Over the many hours of our visits, Joe told me many stories about his

life and we had long discussions about religion and philosophy. I soon realized that Joe saw everything as an interconnected whole: spirituality, nature, politics, science, education were all a part of one another, and reinforced rather than contradicted each other. A deeply spiritual man, Joe despises organized religion. Instead, he finds God's will played out in nature, in marriage, in politics. A liberation theologist before the word was coined, Joe believes that the mission of Jesus is carried out in the modern world by movements to help poor and working people. However he has become disillusioned by the repressive and corrupt nature many of the various political "-isms" purporting to serve the working class. Deriding the Bible because it is "superstitious," Joe finds evidence of God's hand in science books. For Joe, the will of God is revealed through education and reading. God wants us to be free both politically and in our minds. The only way to be free is to rid ourselves of the superstitions of religion and the propaganda of political systems, through education, enlightment.[1]

Shortly after arriving in Brooklyn, Joe joined the Amalgamated Clothing and Textiles Union and found work as a tailor. He told me, "The communists would come and talk to us. They want to help the poor people. But they say there is no God. They say God did not create man, man created God. How can that be? What created man then? There must be a Great Mother and Great Father. The socialists know . . . I was a socialist. Most of the union were socialist. They fight for working people . . . Jesus, he was a good man. He loved working people. He was poor people's protector. He died for poor people, you know. In my country the priests were with the rich people. How can they say they love Jesus when they don't live with the poor people? It does not matter what country or color, we are all God's children. God loves us all."

"In this country," he continued, "everything is for money: Jesus' birthday, presents, for money. It is business. It is all capitalism. But in my country, the communists, they give nothing to the poor. They come with tanks. Lithuania is a small country. Three million people. What can they do against Russia?"

During one visit, Joe showed me a series of bills in different denominations he had created, money for a future Lithuania, free of Russian rule. The bills were thickly covered with images and words: portraits of famous Lithuanian figures, philosophers and writers; political symbols of Lithuania, Christian images. On one side of a bill he had drawn the stages of evolution, from fish to man. Another bill portrayed "ancient priests" performing a ceremony in an oak grove. On another bill was the planet Earth from the perspective of outer space, Lithuania the foremost country, the other planets, sun and moon spread out along the background. Another bill portrayed bombers and the huge mushroom cloud of an exploding

"Joe showed me a series of bills he had created: money for a future Lithuania, free of Russian rule."

atomic bomb. On the bills are written such epithets as "Glorious Lithuania," "Beautiful Lithuania," "Our Lithuania."

One bill showed the head of a woman with a crown, her head radiating a brilliant nimbus. Stars and angels hovered around her. Below her were the words, *"Austros Vartai."* *Austros Vartai*, or "Gate of Dawn" is the southeastern gate to the city of Vilnius, dating back to the Middle Ages. The gate houses the *Austros Vartu Marija*, "Mary of the Dawn Gate," a chapel famous for its healing powers and miracle cures.[2] *Ausrine*, or *Ausra*, is also the name of the goddess who is both the dawn and the morning and evening star in Lithuanian pre-Christian religion. According to Baltic scholar Marija Gimbutas, *Ausrine* and the Virgin Mary, merge in the figure of the Blessed Mother.[3] During one of my visits to Joe, after I'd gotten to know him better, he told me the following story. His mother used to rise each morning before dawn and pray to God Mother, the morning star. When Joe came to this country, he went one night to Coney Island and looked through a telescope. He wanted to see the planet Venus (the evening and morning star). When he found it the planet was in crescent, like the moon. He told me that what he saw through the telescope was the Mother holdng the Babe in her arms.

Joe had mounted the bills in a large bound book, which was about six inches thick. In addition to the bills, the book contained numerous other small paintings and sketches he had made, some dating back to the early 1920s. Each painting was carefully hand-sealed in plastic and each page was protected by a hand-made plastic slip cover.

The pictures, brilliantly painted, were arranged by common themes. The book began with several drawings of the farm on which Joe grew up in Lithuania. Following these were a series of paintings of men in different professions, ranging from clergymen of various religions, to officials typical of a small town in Lithuania. Next was a series of portraits of Lithuanian kings and princes, similar to those on the history cane. Then there was a series of portraits of Joe's family members, and portraits of famous political, cultural, relgious and mythological figures from Lithuanian and Russian history, all painted as playing cards. On one card, Tolstoy, Gorky and Tchiakovski made up the three of spades.

I asked him later about displaying some of the pictures from his book in my exhibit as well as his sticks. He claimed he had misplaced the book, he did not know where it was. I assumed that he simply did not want me to take it but did not want to say no directly, so I did not persist. I did not see that book again for two and a half years.

I completed the exhibit and devoted a page in the catalogue to Joe, but I left Auburn feeling that he deserved much more. I had a strong sense that, not speaking or reading Lithuanian, there was much I was missing about the meaning of Joe's work. His art contained images and words that i felt resonated beyond what I knew about Lithuanian history and culture. To be fully understood and appreciated, Joe's art, philosophy and life must be seen as a whole, must be contextualized in terms of one another. Fur-

thermore, the still photography of the catalogue did not do justice to Joe's work. If the photograph framed the whole of the cane the viewer could not discern the intricate designs on it. But close-ups missed the shape of the whole cane. Close-ups did not adequately represent the design details. Because the canes are relatively narrow and cylindrical, a two-dimensional photograph could give only a limited and distorted view of the artwork on them.

The following year I moved to Auburn to work for the Schweinfurth Art Center as folklorist-in-residence. An old friend from Philadelphia, film maker Peter Biella, called one night. In the course of our conversation, I told him about Joe and asked if Peter were interested in collaborating on a documentary about him. Video or film would be an ideal medium to document Joe's life and artwork. With moving images, the camera could capture the whole of the cane, zoom in for details, and pan and tilt up and down the cane in close-up and the cane could be rotated to show how images connected with each other. We could weave together Joe's artwork with his photographs, his life story and his philosophy of life. We chose video over film because of its relatively lower cost.

When I approached Joe about making the video documentary he had little hesitation. I was somewhat surprised at his enthusiasm because of his initial reluctance to lend his canes to the exhibit the year before. However, I think that displaying them impressed upon him the value of his artwork to people other than himself. Aware of the crucial role learning and knowledge played in Joe's religious thought, I couched the project in terms of its importance to education: little had been recorded about the experience of Lithuanian immigrants to the United States. It was important for people to see Joe's artwork and to understand his experiences as an immigrant from Lithuania, as a worker in a sweat shop, as a union man, as a thoughtful, spiritual man, as an artist. It was important for people to benefit from all Joe had learned in his life.

The Schweinfurth agreed to sponsor the project. Peter and I collaborated on a grant proposal to the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) in early 1986. We hired Elena Bradunas, a specialist in Lithuanian folk art and culture, as our project consultant, although unfortunately she was unable to meet Joe until after the shooting took place.

What seemed at first to be an ideal project ran into many difficulties from the beginning. While in some ways Joe is an unusual case, many of the problems we faced may be endemic to video documentation of the elderly.

The winter I applied for the first grant Joe was in and out of the hospital three times. A week after his second return from the hospital, still weakened from surgery for cancer, he fell down in his large, unheated museum room. He could not get back up. It was two days before anyone found him, and he was soon back in the hospital with pneumonia. Joe was approaching the point at which he could no longer care for himself alone. His neighbor, Marion Reynolds, took him in for the rest of the winter.

However, in the spring, he insisted on returning to his house.

Concerned about Joe's failing health, I requested an early review of the grant proposal to NYSCA so that we could shoot the video that summer. However, NYSCA policy mandated that film and video applications be reviewed only in October. That fall, the proposal was funded and the Schweinfurth received the grant in December 1986. Meanwhile, nervously, we waited through another year.

That winter, again, Joe's health was poor. He had two stays in the hospital. Again he lived with Marion for the winter, and again he insisted on returning to his home in the spring. Now however it was clear that he could not care for himself. He did not always remember to eat, he had begun to fall more frequently and was unable to get up. Marion began to come over once or twice a day to feed and care for him.

We started shooting the video in mid-July of 1987 with a crew of four: Peter Biella and I as co-directors; Peter as cameraman; Ivan Drufovka-Restrepo as soundman; and Peter's wife, Amy Wells, who assisted with various tasks. We intended to stay for two weeks. The production took place at a time when Joe was just beginning to cope with one of the most stressful crises of his life: the realization that he could no longer take care of himself and that he was losing his independence.

The results of Joe's decline in health were clear from the first day of shooting. He slept a great deal. More than once we spent an hour and a half setting up the lights and camera only to find that he had just settled down for a nap. We would either have to wait until he awoke or dismantle everything and set up to shoot something else. Often by that time Joe would be awake again and ready for an interview. In the early days when we were getting very little useable footage of Joe and were trying to tape him as much as we could, this was extremely frustrating.

Marion, Joe's caretaker, began coming less frequently when we began to shoot. She had the courage to admit to me later that she had felt jealous and resentful to us, and she apologized. She told me, "I was feeling, 'Why is he letting you into his life like that and telling you all those personal things about himself when he hardly even knows you? You are strangers. I've known him for years. Maybe he just likes you better. Well fine, then you can take care of him'." We began taking over many caretaking responsibilities, including meal preparation and cleaning and dressing Joe.

We found ourselves washing his dishes, sweeping, dusting, mopping and cleaning his house. There was evidence that rats had once lived there. Judith told us that the year before she and other friends of Joe's insisted that he poison the rats. He protested, "How can I kill a rat? What if she is pregnant?" Joe has a strong sense of the sacredness of all living creatures, including rats. His friends finally convinced him of the necessity of extermination, but the rat holes remained.

The first day of the shoot Ivan, the soundman, found a snake in the side room where the refrigerator was located. He told Joe who replied, "Oh yes, they like to play there." Joe sees the holy spirit in all of nature; to him

all living things, including snakes and rats, are sacred. There were numerous garter snakes all over the outside of Joe's house. At least four lived in the cracked concrete steps to the back door, on which we ate lunch each day. Ivan and I were afraid of snakes and walked very cautiously when outside the house.

All of this had a depressing effect on the crew. Adding to our depression were the production problems that arose. Joe's decline in health created many difficulties in interviewing him in front of the camera.

Joe's speech was less clear and coherent than when I had first met him, two and a half years before. It was more difficult for him to communicate in English. Many foreign-born Americans as they age, find that their first language comes to mind readily while their English becomes increasingly difficult to remember.[4] Joe was very aware of this difficulty with language and it frustrated and upset him. Angrily he would ask us, "Why didn't you do this twenty years ago?" In our conversations before production, he had often given lengthy, circuitous answers to my questions. Now, even more, he did not answer questions directly. If I asked him a question about one topic, either he would not understand me or he would be reminded of another topic about which he would then talk at length. His memory was poor; he had forgotten many of the stories he had told me two years ago. In some cases when I reminded him of a story he would exclaim "I never told you that!" He would proceed to talk about another topic and perhaps forty-five minutes later he would begin telling the story he had denied knowing before.

He found it very difficult to speak freely. When I asked him to tell me about an event of his life and he would reply, "I don't know what you want, what do you want me to say?" I would tell him to be himself and just tell me about it like he had before in our many previous conversations. He would reply angrily, "If this is a movie I must have a script! Where is the script?" He was worried that his English was not correct, that he could not think of the right words, that he did not speak well.

All of these are problems that a folklorist using a cassette recorder and ninety minute tapes can take in stride. However they are problems that can make a videographer using twenty minute broadcast-quality tapes, costing thirteen dollars each, apoplectic. (The real cost is not so much in the tapes themselves but in the salaries of the crew and the transcribers and editors who must wade through everything.) We had a film treatment, we knew the topics and stories we wanted Joe to tell; but we had no way of knowing whether or not he would tell the stories while the camera was rolling. All we could do was let the camera roll, keep talking to Joe and hope that eventually he would get around to saying what we needed. Because of this, we ended up using over twice the amount of film we had budgeted.

Another major problem was Joe's discomfort during the actual shooting. He hated the lights; their heat in the middle of the summer tired him quickly. He hated the artificiality of the videotaped interview. Since I was

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not to appear in the video, I sat about six feet away from him to be out of range of the camera. This was an unnatural distance for conversation for him, he wanted me to sit closer. He felt very self-conscious. We both found it hard to talk naturally with that distance between us and with those bright, hot lights shining on us.

Another technical requirement of video production created other discomforts. In editing video, in order to make clean sound cuts, there must be a pause of several seconds between voices. Each time I wanted to ask a question I had to wait and leave a pause after he finished speaking. I could not let my voice overlap his. My end of the conversation was reduced to nods and facial expressions and intermittent questions. This added to Joe's sense of the unnaturalness of the interview. I tried to reassure him, yet I felt uncomfortable too; I had never worked this way before either. Perhaps this discomfort plays a part in any documentary, but in Joe's case it was exacerbated by his age and declining health.

The first day of shooting we ended up with about an hour's footage of Joe looking upset and uncomfortable, misunderstanding my questions, giving short disgruntled answers. The situation had not improved by the end of the first week, and we were on a two week shooting schedule. The only usable footage we shot was of Joe's artwork. But even the canes presented problems. We had hoped to rotate the canes on film to show the whole of the design. But the canes are very irregular and with a close-up lens they easily went in and out of focus as they were rotated. It was exacting, difficult work and it took far longer than anyone had imagined. There was a heatwave. Tempers flared. One afternoon when I was called away to a meeting, Joe became very angry at Peter. He said, "Who are you? You are not my friend! What is this monkey business?" Production stopped for the rest of the afternoon while tempers cooled.

At the end of the first week we were exhausted and discouraged. On Sunday we had a meeting and seriously faced the question: will it be possible to complete this video? At that point it looked very doubtful. We reviewed our other options: Could we change topics at this point, choose another artist? Lack of time and preparation precluded that possibility. We had only a week left. By default we decided to push on and see what we could do.

The large art book with Joe's small colorful portraits and series of future Lithuanian money had still not appeared. When I questioned him about it, sometimes he did not remember where he had put it, sometimes he did not remember having made it at all. In view of his enthusiasm for the project and his failing memory about other things, I began to suspect that he was not just putting me off about it, but that he had actually forgotten where he had put it. Judith and Marion remembered it, but had not seen it for two years. We searched his house but could not find it. As a last resort at the end of the first week of shooting, I asked Joe if we could look in his safe. He gave permission but said that he had not been able to open it for several years; Marion had the combination. With much

difficulty we opened the safe. I felt then that our luck had finally changed: the book, which I had begun to think was a figment of my imagination, was sitting on the shelf. Joe was overjoyed to see it again and gratified at our interest in it.

By the second week we had a sense of Joe's sleeping and eating patterns and we were much more successful at coordinating our shooting schedule with Joe's habits. I spent a lot of time talking to him — chatting, reassuring him, explaining what we were doing and why we were doing it. We resigned ourselves to the necessity of using extra tape and experimented with ways of interviewing Joe. We finally hit upon some techniques that worked. A turning point came when Peter played back to Joe some of the previous weeks' footage on the five inch monitor. Joe was fascinated by the images and excited to see himself on the screen. We had taped him looking through his photograph album. At the time he had been uncomfortable and disgruntled and had had little to say about his pictures. However when we showed him the footage of him looking at the album he became very interested in it. The tape of the album was a better illicitation tool than the album itself. We were able to use the Nagra to tape his comments for use as voice-over in the video. Reviewing our footage seemed to give Joe a better understanding of what we were doing. He became more accepting of the lights and the camera.

"A turning point came when Peter played back to Joe some of the previous week's footage."

To cope with Joe's memory loss, his dislike of the camera and lights and our shortage of tape, we recorded ten hours of interviews on a Nagra, with which he was much more comfortable, for use as voice-over. We decided to shift the focus of the video slightly and include interviews with Marion and Judith. These two women, Joe's best friends, could talk about Joe from their points of view, fill in background information that we couldn't get from him, and clarify some of his less coherent statements.

Because of the lack of clarity of Joe's speech, we have found that most people viewing our footage are unable to understand him. To resolve this problem we decided to use subtitles wherever Joe speaks. This is not an ideal solution, but it seems the best of our options.

After our experience I would strongly urge that any film or video maker working with a subject whose first language is not English, hire someone with a sensitivity to the issues of gerontology and culture who can interview the subject in his/her native tongue. Our consultant Elena Bradunas was unable to be present during the shooting. She lives in Hawaii and we could not afford to pay her way to Ithaca. We hired a Lithuanian translator from Binghamton to come and meet Joe. We realized later that he had taken an unsympathetic view of Joe. In his translations of Joe's writing, the translator assumed that Joe's archaic spellings of words were misspel-

lings and that his revisions of the Lord's Prayer were evidence of his ignorance and eccentricity. He told us that Joe did not speak Lithuanian much more fluently than he did English. Based on this information, we decided not to record an interview in Lithuanian. However when Elena met Joe the following summer,she found his Lithuanian speech eloquent and poetic. We all felt it was a loss not to be able to display this eloquence in the video. To compensate we decided to hire a make narrator to read excerpts of Joe's writing in Lithuanian and English for use as voice-over.

Much credit must be given to Joe for the resolution of our production problems. We were shooting at an extremely stressful period of his life, one in which he faced the loss of his independence. Our presence was disruptive to his privacy and daily routine.[5] Joe had lived alone for nearly thirty years. Suddenly there were four people in his house eight hours a day, every day, for three weeks. This circumstance would be a trial for someone in the best of health. Originally we had planned to work half days, in consideration of his privacy. However between our caring for him and preparing meals, and Joe's eating and napping, there was so little time in which we could videotape him that we had to be present for entire day to seize any opportunity. For the most part, Joe showed much patience and faith in the project. There were several times when he became irate and angry at our presence. But he wanted very much to make the video. I asked him at one point if he wanted us to leave. He said "No, no, this is important, it is for education." As we left Joe's house on our last day he said to Peter, "Thank you, Mr. Photographer, for what you do for me."

Some of the problems we faced are unavoidable in documentaries with an elderly subject. However many can be eased with forethought. One of the most important considerations in filming or taping the elderly is that they are more likely than any other group to become ill before or during production. The long wait between the conception of the project and the receipt of funds increases the likelihood that health problems will interfere with shooting. It is essential therefore to factor additional time and expense into scheduling and funding requests. The filmmaker will very likely spend increased amounts of time setting up and making shots and will use additional film or tape to get the takes he or she wants. He or she must be willing to experiment with ways to make the subject more comfortable in front of the camera. A higher than usual shooting ratio (raw footage to finished film) should be expected, and as a result, longer hours in the editing room.

The folklorist or traditional arts specialist acts as liaison between the artist and the production crew. He or she must prepare the artist for what is to come, both before and during production. He or she must spend a good deal of time explaining to the artist what the crew is doing, what is going to happen next and why, what he or she can expect in the coming days. Any changes in the schedule must be made clear well in advance. He or she may have to reassure the subject and help to ease him or her into the unfamiliar experience of film or video production. The folklorist

must understand and explain the needs of the artist to the crew. The very elderly often do not have much flexibility in their daily routines; they must eat and nap at specific times. The production team must be made aware of the physical limitations of the subject and adapt itself to the subject's requirements. The subject cannot be pushed; shooting must end well before he or she is tired. Sufficient time must be planned into the project to allow for this accommodation.

Another issue to keep in mind when recording the aged is that of sound quality. Very old people are generally harder to understand than younger people, and it is important to do everything possible to improve the quality of their voices. We used baffles for most of our taping. Baffles are large sound-absorbent pads hung from the ceiling which literally surround the subject. They not only increase the quality of the voice, but also they block out much of the unwanted ambient sound. The choice of microphone is an important decision. Not all mikes have the same signal-response. If the subject has a low or throaty voice it might be distorted with a mike that accentuates the lower frequencies. Because Joe always forgot that he should not touch the mike we attached to his shirt, we found it necessary to put the mike on a boom or hang it from the ceiling.

In retrospect, my feelings about the project are mixed. On the one hand, it was a difficult and stressful shoot. Our shooting time was increased by a week and a half. We ended up with a thirty to one shooting ratio (fifteen hours of footage for a half hour finished product). Most documentaries are shot with a ten to one ratio. Because of this our editing time quadrupled. None of these expenses were included in our original grant. We managed to cover some of these expenses with additional grants from NYSCA and the Lithuanian Foundation in Chicago, but Peter and I had to absorb the remainder ourselves.

On the other hand, we recorded some beautiful footage on a fascinating subject. While I had doubts at one point about whether it would be possible to make the video, I never doubted that it was worth the trouble. Joe is very happy that the project took place. He feels gratified that his life's work — his philosophical thought and his art — will reach the world and serve the cause of education. He recovered his health remarkably several months after production ended. He now lives with Marion who cares for him full-time in a small town near Ithaca. The video is not yet finished; at the time of this writing we are in the midst of final editing. Our projected date of completion is December, 1989.[6]

NOTES

1. Joe spoke frequently of a book he had written about his political and religious philosophy. He told us despairingly that he could no longer find the book. When I introduced Elena Bradunas, Lithuanian consultant to the project, to Joe in the summer of 1988, we asked if we could search his house for it. He agreed. We found the book among several other journals in one of the refrigerators in his Museum Room. Elena's reading of this bound, neatly hand-written book (written in Lithuanian) confirms that Joe is a man who has reflected a great deal on his experiences and

has created a rather intricate world view. His insights on the order of the natural and supernatural worlds show that he has read a great deal and given thought to the most cogent issues of his time. He writes about a variety of topics from reflections on the existence of God to the shortcomings of Communism, to the importance of scientific knowledge and reasoning. He even addresses such contemporary concerns as healthy diets, the danger of preservatives and pesticides, the importance of the equality of women, and the threat of nuclear war and an unlimited arms buildup. He writes well, with rhetorical flair, numerous digressions, and a tongue-in-cheek humor. His ideas are organized into sections, headed with questions or dialogic statements, as in a philosophical treatise.

Two other journals were found at this time. All are addressed to Joe's fellow Lithuanians. One is entitled "My Testament to You," and the other is addressed "To My Beloved Country; My Lithuanian Brother and Sister." Both contain reminiscences about his youth, interspersed throughout the text, often as asides or illustrations of some other ideas or thoughts he is trying to convey. (Bradunas 1989)

2. For more on *Austros Vartai* see *Encyclopedia Lituanica*, vol. I (Suziedelis 1970: 219-22) For other aspects of Lithuanian history and culture see the other six volumes, particularly the entries for Folklore, Folk Art, and Ornaments.

3. According to Baltic scholar Marija Gimbutas, Christianity came to Lithuania later than to other European countries and never established as strong a hold over the minds of the rural population. She cites references to the continuity of pre-Christian religious practices well into the 18th century, and its strong influence on Lithuanian Christianity into the 20th century (Gimbutas 1963:179, 1987:1-5). Gimbutas cites the fusion of *Austrine* with the Virgin Mary under Christianity (Gimbutas 1987:17).

4. Joe lived in a Lithuanian speaking community in Brooklyn for over forty years. He planned to return to Lithuania to live until the second World War thwarted his dreams. Because of this, he never learned English well until later in life. He learned much of his English from extensive reading and his pronunciation reflects this; words such as "asked" are given two syllables — "asked." He pronounces the "p" in pneumonia.

5. See the work of Barabara Myerhoff for the importance of routine and independence to the elderly (Myerhoff 1978).

6. For information about obtaining copies of this documentary, please contact:

Documentary Film
4917 Hazel Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19143
(215) 748-4097

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Trouble Shooting: Overcoming Problems of Collaboration in Film Production

PETER BIELLA

In recent years, folklorists and other cultural specialists have introduced a high academic standard to documentary films through their collaboration with filmmakers (Asch 1988). They base film and video proposals on their own research and find sympathetic filmmakers who can complete and realize their vision. Because collaborations between academics and filmmakers are relatively novel, they often encounter difficulties that are not anticipated. This essay, by an anthropologist who has made collaborative ethnographic films for ten years,[1] describes such difficulties. It is written primarily for folklorists and other academics but it should also help filmmakers to understand these collaborators better.

Weighing the Decision to Collaborate on a Film

Filmmaking requires a major commitment of time. For people whose expertise is culture and not filmmaking, the first element of an informed decision to collaborate is the knowledge that a staggering amount of work is required in the production of a film. Most collaborative films require more than one year to complete. Many such productions take longer than two years, and given the fact of financial problems and other delays, ten-year projects are not unknown. (Indeed, many collaborative projects are never finished, even after years of effort and thousands of dollars spent!) Because a considerable time commitment is required of the cultural specialist, he or she must be willing to sacrifice other projects which would compete for time. Unfortunately, many anthropologists and folklorists are drawn into a filmmaking commitment incrementally. Only after a great deal of labor on a film do they realize that its completion requires the sacrifice of competing professional commitments.

Figure 1 is an estimate of the time which collaborators can expect to spend to produce a thirty-minute 16mm film or videotape. The estimate is based on assumptions discussed below.

After conceiving of and researching the subject for a film, the cultural specialist must first work alone to find an acceptable filmmaking collaborator. The search may take several weeks of part-time effort. Then, with the filmmaker's help, the writing of a contract and a film grant proposal

TASK	FULL-TIME WORK	
	FOLKLORIST	FILMMAKER
Preproduction		
Finding help/Grantwriting	1-2 months	1 month
Storyboard/Shopping list	1 month	1 month
Production		
Filming time	1-3 months	1-3 months
Postproduction		
Transcription/Footage prep.	2-4 months	1 month
Editing/Production of copies	4-5 months	4-5 months
TOTAL FULL-TIME WORK	9-15 months	8-11 months
Add'l time required		
Waiting	1 or more years	

Figure 1. **Sample Time-Table: Estimated Months Required for the Production of a 30-Minute, Grant-Sponsored Film or Video**

easily consumes one month. Typically, the collaborators then wait three to ten months to learn whether they will be given funds. During this period, both must be careful to arrange their schedules so that they are able to interrupt their current work to make the film should funding arrive. This juggling is difficult because granting agency deadlines are based on their own fiscal year, not on the convenience of the collaborators.

With the receipt of funding, the filmmaker and cultural specialist spend at least one month, part-time, creating a script, storyboard and shopping list. These written tools, which will be described more fully below, allow the collaborators to create the film as much as is possible in the imagination. This prepares them for the period of filming, when unanticipated, unfolding events must be judged for their potential usefulness, then filmed or ignored.

Time in the field spent filming varies dramatically with the available budget. A minimum of one month of filming is higly recommended, considering both the infrequency of "perfect moments" and the vagaries of shooting non-recurrent phenomena*.[2] Despite the necessity for preplanning and script writing, events which are entirely unanticipated often provide the most marvelous footage. The longer one is in the field, the better one's chances of being with the camera in the right place at the right time (McCarty 1975). Opportunities for luck and sensitivity to nuance increase with production time (Rouch 1978). Under ideal conditions, several months in the field should be budgeted.

Upon returning home after filming, a huge amount of material must

be transcribed and perhaps translated as well. Depending on the shooting-ratio* of the project, the cultural specialist must spend a month or more at this as well as logging the footage which has been shot. The dialogue and description of all potentially useful material must be typed. If the production is in 16mm, the filmmaker or an assistant will require several weeks to add sync-sound* to the workprint* footage. If the medium is videotape, preparation of a workprint requires far less time.

Together, the filmmaker and cultural specialist then edit the film. At least three-quarters of full-time participation by the latter is probably essential for success. This is particularly true when a great deal of the footage was *not* anticipated by the script, that is, was shot with the documentary* approach. In order to think creatively as an editor, one must memorize all of one's footage. In my experience, about twenty-five hours per editor per minute of finished film are needed in the editing stage. Thus, a half-hour program requires more than four months of editing by each of the collaborators.

In addition, apparently inconsequential details of editing consume enormous amounts of time. For example, the preparation of subtitles to translate thirty minutes of speech may require a month's work. Simply maintaining communication with one's non-profit sponsor necessitates dozens of hours, as does communicating with technicians who produce the finished film or video. More weeks can be consumed promoting a film debut.

Enormous amounts of time also pass when work is stopped. A painful example occurs when production halts because funding has been exhausted. When the sponsor's funding cycle does not coincide with project needs, the collaborators must find short-term work during the delay. Commitments to other professional activities may also entail postponing completion of a film. Inactive periods often consume years.

"Salaries constitute about half of most serious film and video budgets."

Filmmaking is expensive. Salaries constitute about half of most serious film and video budgets. In the world of corporate and television filmmaking, modestly-priced producer/directors earn $1,500 a week while camera operators, sound recordists and editors expect at least $1,000.[3] Under those conditions, the labor costs of the short project described above are quite high. With the other unavoidable expenses in film and video, the *least* expensive serious documentary production will cost over $2,000 per minute of screen time. When the filmmaker alone is paid a professional salary, total production costs usually exceed $3,000 per minute. This fact places high-quality filmmaking well outside the range of personally-funded projects and into the arduous world of fundraising.

Many believe that the "video revolution" has made low-cost filmmaking possible. Indeed, if one considers the cost of videotape versus that of

EXPENSE CATEGORY	LABOR IN WEEKS	INVARIANT EXPENSES	VARIABLE EXPENSES 16mm	VARIABLE EXPENSES VIDEO
DIRECT COSTS				
Production — 4 weeks				
Folklorist (½ full salary)	2			
Filmmaker (¾ full salary)	3			
Typing/xerox		$ 500		
Production — 10 weeks				
Folklorist (½ full salary)	5			
Filmmaker (full salary)	10			
Sound (¾ full salary)	7.5			
Assistant (¼ full salary)	2.5			
Per diem (4x10 wks x $125)		$ 5,000		
Equipment rental		$10,000[6]		
Transportation		$ 1,000		
Raw stock			$4,000	$ 500
Postproduction — 20 weeks				
Folklorist (½ full salary)	10			
Filmmaker (¾ full salary)	15			
Editing equipment rental		$ 5,000		
Workprint			$7,000	$1,000
Production house fees			$8,000	$4,000
Copies for release (x10)			$1,500	$ 500
Direct Costs Subtotal	56 wks	$21,500	$20,500	$6,000
INDIRECT COSTS				
Office (10%)	5.6	$ 2,150	$ 2,050	$ 600
Contingency (15%)	8.4	$ 3,225	$ 3,075	$ 900
Insurance		$ 750[7]		
	71 wks	$27,625	$25,625	$7,500

Full Salary per week	Salary Expense	Total for 16mm	Total for Video
$1,500	$106,500	**$159,750**	**$141,625**
$1,000	$ 71,000	**$124,250**	**$106,125**
$ 500	$ 35,500	**$ 88,750**	**$ 70,625**

Figure 2. **Sample Budget: Six Cost Estimates For a 30-Minute Program**

16mm film, the latter is almost fifty times more expensive.[5] But other factors almost cancel out this difference. Labor, travel and *per diem* cost, which are difficult to reduce, are very high and essentially the same in video and film production. Similarly, rental costs for production and editing equipment are comparable in both. Because of these factors, the most reasonable broadcast quality* video budget is likely to be no more than 25% cheaper

than the equivalent budget for production in film.[5] Thus, 16mm, even at a higher price, is a very attractive option since it has better image quality — particularly of outdoor light — greater equipment reliability, and greater opportunities for distribution.

Film costs vary tremendously depending on the specifics of the film. Nevertheless, to give the reader an idea of the elements involved in budgeting, *Figure 2* outlines expenses for six alternatively-priced film and video programs. The programs are a half-hour long and are shot over a period of ten weeks in the United States. Text and footnotes qualify the assumptions made in *Figure 2*.

This sample Budget assumes that working for love is very common in collaborative projects: participants may accept less than professional rates. For this reason, the Budget first estimates only the necessary labor in weeks, not in dollars. Three alternate full-time salary rates are applied to these hours in order to calculate costs. To simplify calculations, if a person is to be paid a fraction of the "Full Salary," that fraction is listed and calculated as a reduction of weeks in the "Labor in Weeks" column. For example, the cultural specialist ("folklorist") is paid half-salary for the four weeks of "Preproduction:" only two weeks are listed.

The Budget distinguishes between "Invariant Expenses," those which are roughly the same in film and video production, and "Variable Expenses," those for which video production is significantly less expensive. At the bottom of the Budget, the six totals reflect the different wage scales in conjunction with the Invariant and Variable 16mm/Video expenses.

Filmmaking is rarely valued by academics. National Broadcast of one's film or film awards may lead to professional advancement, but folklorists, anthropologists and other social scientists typically receive tenure and attractive job offers on the basis of publications, not films. An implicit bias against filmmaking exists in academic circles. Thus, the cultural specialist who dedicates a year or more to the production of a film should realize that academic penalties may result. Papers will necessarily go unwritten and department heads may frown.

Even under the best conditions, then, film projects occasionally lose their charm and momentum. A film is only worth the trouble if its subject matter is very dear to the hearts of those who choose to make it. In fairness, it should be added that films, like fieldwork and research topics, easily become dear to the heart.

Selecting the Right Collaborator

Nothing is more fulfilling in making a film than the help of a competent, hard-working collaborator. But filmmaking, like the social sciences and other professions, has its share of charlatans. No degree or union card is required and people with little skill pass themselves as filmmakers every day.

Thus, the most prudent step for someone who wishes to find a film-

making collaborator is to request a *curriculum vita* and ask to see sample films or videotapes.[8] While competent evaluation of the *vita* may be possible, non-filmmakers should be aware that they may not be qualified to judge the technical quality of a sample film or tape. Many novices to film simply cannot tell, for example, if an image is in sharp focus or if the sound track is as clean as it should be. The ability to make such distinctions comes with experience, and the cultural specialist is advised to seek the help of an expert.

In addition to viewing a sample tape, it is prudent to see proof, in the form of the film's credits, of the contribution that the filmmaker claims to have made. Credits are the film industry's legal announcement of achievement. Unfortunately, credits in non-Hollywood film productions are not entirely reliable. For a number of reasons, people may be credited for work they did not perform. However, if an individual credit is questionable, a track record of some length is difficult to concoct. (Similarly, if a field-language is needed, language competence should not be assumed to exist simply because it is listed on a *vita*.)

Apart from the demonstrated skill of the filmmaker, personality is also important. Although a filmmaker may be charming during the initial interview, it is wise to contact the filmmaker's past colleagues, collaborators and clients. Filmmakers with brilliant sample tapes may be egotistical beyond belief, a quality few would choose to experience at close range for many months of collaboration. Since ego conflicts are responsible for the collapes of many collaborations, serious, concerted investigation is prudent.

Filmmakers should also subject their potential collaborators to careful scrutiny: again, interviews with past colleagues are advisable. This investigation of the collaborator's compatibility is doubly valuable because, in addition to showing whether he or she could be an amiable co-worker, it will also indicate the quality of his or her relations with the people who are to be filmed.

It is important for the filmmaker to learn whether the potential collaborator actually has the cultural expertise that is claimed. Superficial or pretended knowledge of the field situation on the part of the cultural specialist dangerously hinders the filmmaker's ability to work. Even recognized experts may permit an exaggerated impression of their first-hand field knowledge. To avoid later embarassment, it is advisable for the filmmaker to elicit a clear statement from the cultural specialist which distinguishes first-hand knowledge from that which is based on the work of others. False impressions can compromise a project's integrity and can even lead to legal action if the original researcher discovers that work has been used without proper citation.

Self-protecting filmmakers should therefore emulate academics' own methods of evaluating one another's expertise. Three measures are principally used. First, academics learn the amount of time a researcher has spent conducting fieldwork in the subject area: competence is usually acquired with years, not months. The second indication is found from the

potential collaborator's history of courses taught or papers published on the subject area. Publications should at least be skimmed.[9] Third, since mastery of the local language is an accurate gauge of the ability to conduct fieldwork, the question of language competence should be posed directly. Mistranslations, based on a collabortor's lack of skill, can cause an enormous waste of film and money.

Returning to the subject of the cultural specialist's search for a collaborator, it is reasonable to consider working with a young filmmaker who is near the beginning of his or her career. Experienced filmmakers, who have many job options and who are likely to expect a high salary, are also likely to decline speculative collaborations. Less established filmmakers will be most willing to share hardships and uncertainty.

Young producer/directors have fewer expenses and no easy options. They recognize that speculative proposal writing, dubious funding and low income are necessary components of beginning a life in independent film. Young filmmakers are therefore ideally situated to appreciate a film idea on the basis of its intellectual — not its remunerative — potential. This enthusiasm in the face of hardship is a powerful asset: funding through grants is a difficult and frustrating endeavor. With effort, the social scientist may find a young filmmaking prodigy who believes in a project and will bend over backward to finish it.

"Less established filmmakers will be most willing to share hardships and uncertainty."

The assets of young filmmakers, however, must be evaluated in relation to their disadvantages. In contrast to established professionals, an inexperienced cinematographer is likely to lose a number of important shots because of technical foul-ups. This can be a serious — if relatively rare — problem in documentary situations when the events to be filmed happen only once. Further, in contrast to a film expert, less experienced people need more preparation time for each filming task: this too results in the loss of desirable shots, and it increases the tedium of production. Less experienced filmmakers may not be able to achieve the highest technical quality. Another drawback my be psychological: inexperienced filmmakers may be under pressure to prove themselves and may feel as if their egos are on display with each frame of film. This attitude brings out bad character traits.

Despite the vigor of youthful filmmakers, from the viewpoint of the academic collaborator, older and more experienced filmmakers do have a number of advantages. Perhaps more important than their technical excellence, their speed and their calm attitude, filmmakers with long experience have contacts with the people who fund films. They know what the funders want to hear. Contacts, experience and a track record of film awards may be the deciding factors in winning a competitive production grant. Experienced filmmakers' demand for substantial salaries, then, may

be justified by the fact that they are most capable of winning the grants which pay them.

Unfortunately, most older filmmakers are not likely to see the same advantages in film collaboration that can be seen by cultural specialists. Indeed, the very fact that such projects demand close collaboration may be unattractive to directors accustomed to years of autonomous work. Further, filmmakers with long experience are necessarily entrepreneurs who recognize that grant speculation is relatively poor business. Many will avoid involvement for this reason: they know that grant money is virtually all that is available for independent academic films, and that compared to industrial and speculative capital for films, grant money is small and difficult to get. (A grant may never come at all, and, if it comes partially, partial funding leaves the Hobson's choice of waiting for another grant cycle, abandoning a half-finished project or completing a film without pay.) Finally, experienced filmmakers may wish to avoid grant-supported films because the highest salary levels available for them are comparatively low. In short, from the experienced filmmaker's viewpoint, this type of project has a high risk of failure and low yield with success. On the other hand, a few well established filmmakers are committed to the cause of academic collaboration and are willing to accept the hardships. Indeed, some have made careers from doing so.

To find experienced filmmakers who have collaborated on films related to the proposed topic, the cultrual specialist may begin with a search of special publications, and the film reviews of many journals and newsletters. [10] Folklorists seeking to find advanced students of anthropological filmmaking should search in the graduate visual anthropology programs which exist in several universities.[11]

Agreements About "Final Control" Over the Film

At their first meeting, academics and filmmakers may bring expectations about collaboration which easily lead to conflict. Two strong personalities, bolstered by definite ideas of professionalism and integrity, are likely to encounter apparent incompatibilities which must be overcome.

Looking first toward academe, it is fair to say that cultural specialists who wish to make a film about their own fieldwork have an unusual amount of pluck. Their personal involvement and professional ethics require them to insist that the subject of the film is handled carefully. All too many films do not bear the mark of a competent ethnographer. The interest in collaboration with a filmmaker is therefore likely to be counterbalanced by a strong desire to control the film.

To a practicing filmmaker, the academic will first be seen as "just another potential client." As such, the client's desire to control will be familiar: clients typically have it. But clients are also typically "film illiterate:" they are oblivious to film conventions, to standards of quality, and they tend to request film cliches. Thus, filmmakers know that in order to maintain their own professional standards, they are often obliged to reject many

if not most of a client's efforts at control.[12]

Here then is the greatest problem facing alegitimate ethnographic collaboration: this type of project is not a typical filmmaker/client relationship in which the client returns after three months and is presented with a finished work: legitimate ethnographic films can only be shot and edited with a cultural expert's constant interpretive guidance.

Just as the cultural expert must demand the right of constant input, the filmmaker equally has the right to insist upon control over many directing and editing decisions. An impasse will inevitably result until the collaborators agree upon their job descriptions. From the beginning, each must allow the other to maintain professional standards. Each must admit ignorance of the other's expertise. Since ethnography and exposition necessarily merge, the success of this advice requires that the collaborators never stop collaborating with one another.

The following "Guideline for Collaboration," I believe, is sympathetic to the requirements of both professions: For a collaboration to succeed, the cultural specialist can be responsible only for the film's issues, for keeping the ethnography on the right track; and the filmmaker can be responsible only for the film's exposition, for directing its image, sound and structure.

The Guideline is not likely to sit well with some cultural experts. Indeed, many people initiate film collaborations with the idea of a nonnegotiable demand that they must have the final word and creative control over the film. They often insist that they be designated the film's director or co-director. In my view, an informed cultural expert should not desire this designation, and a self-protecting filmmaker should not permit it.

The academic's desire to direct is based on two mistaken assumptions, one about the required qualifications of the director, the other about the director's right to control. An analysis of these two misunderstandings should reduce both the desire of the film novice to direct and the severity of future arguments with the filmmaking collaborator.

First, many newcomers to film think that directing requires no previous experience. They assume that anyone with a competent film crew and a good idea can be a director. Novices often believe that the technical skills of filmmaking — such as the ability to record picture with correct exposure and focus — are the only necessary filmmaking skills which they lack. Collaboration, on this assumption, is therefore conceived as a process in which the novice is the director who "chooses picture and sound" and the filmmaker is the technician hired to record them.

This first assumption seriously underestimates the skill and experience which a director must have to "choose picture and sound" well. Directors must know how to transform a scenario, a written description of each scene, into individual shots. To do this, he or she will provide footage of the film's major subjects, but must also provide a great deal of other material which, to a novice, is not obviously necessary. Establishing shots, cut-aways and match-cuts are a few examples of this type of material without which a

film cannot be made. Further, in "choosing picture and sound" a director must also handle a number of other problems, such as designing the film's aesthetics, keeping it the right length, watching the budget, and monitoring the crew. All of these activities require skill that can only be gained through protracted experience. If the cultural specialist takes the title of director but expects the filmmaker to handle these matters, then the filmmaker is *de facto* director and the cultural specialist a *poseur*.[13]

The second false assumption is that a film director is "completely in charge of what is shot." Following this stereotype, cultural specialists believe that they must direct because only in that way can they defend their right to influence the course of the film. This right should be defended differently. To explain the ideal collaboration, I propose a limited analogy which shows the dependence of directors on other professionals. The task of the cultural specialist is like that of the Hollywood scenario-writer. The filmmaker collaborator is like the fiction director who must realize the scenario on film. Similarities between this ideal of the academic collaborator and the scenarist include the following: both determine the subject, the "plot" and the tone of a film; both select characters and locations; and neither have much to say about lighting, camera position, or the aesthetics of sound and image.

The analogy is limited, but the differences also have implications for collaborators. First, collaborative films are documentaries, not fiction. For this reason much of the scenario must be written on the spot, as events unfold. The cultural specialist must therefore be on location during production to advise the director. Second, without the apprenticeship and training which Hollywood scenarists undergo, academic collaborators are not fully competent to prepare a script. During production and before, the collaborating filmmaker will also make contributions and improvements. Third, the Hollywood scenarist has nothing to do with editing. This must not be the case in collaborative filmmaking.

To summarize, cultural specialists are urged not to initiate film collaborations with the intention of directing or even of receiving the designation of director as a polite fiction. Rather, they should maximize the usefulness of their special knowledge by acting in the capacity of ethnographic scenarists, full-time consultants who, without directing a film, nevertheless have countless opportunities to shape it.

Similarly, the cultural specialist should not demand the designation of producer, another difficult job that requires experience to perform. Control over the film should be sustained through collaborative negotiation, not through the assumption of difficult roles for which the applicant is unqualified.

Financial Agreements with the Filmmaker

Once a filmmaker has been found and basic agreements about the division of labor have been made, the two collaborators must discuss finances. Their first task should be to create a written contract. When large sums of money are involved, a contract should be written with a lawyer.

The contract gives the names of the collaborators, gives their job descriptions, and lists the film's credits *verbatim* (to the extent possible at the time). The contract details the ownership of the film and film footage, of the copyright and of the profits from sales, rental, or broadcast. Through reference to the project budget, which should be attached to the contract as an appendix, hours and salaries of all parties are described. It may be hoped that a contract, once written, will not be required again. Unfortunately, catastrophes such as the death of one of the collaborators will be so terribly disrupting without a contract that the advantages of the hand-shake theory of agreements are far outweighed by the disadvantages.

The contract provides an opportunity for the collaborators to anticipate future problems and agree how to resolve them. In the following, a few of the thorny issues are mentioned. (For further information about film contracts, see Gregory 1979:125-129 and Wiese 1984a:94-96.)

The owner of a film copyright has the power to control its distribution and the use of revenue derived from it. Ownership of the copyright, then, must be decided with the creation of the contract. Insofar as both collaborators are responsible for writing the grant proposal which funds the film, I believe that both should own the copyright. If other extenuating factors enter — if, for example, the filmmaker contributes very little to writing the proposal or if he or she contributes a great deal of valuable equipment for free — then the funds should be reallocated accordingly.

Successful grant proposals always include a detailed budget.[14] Collaborators are advised to spend all of the time necessary to agree on budget categories and the desired levels of funding. It should be understood that the least expensive film budget is not necessarily the most attractive to funders. Granting agencies want to believe both that they are funding people whose skills command reasonable salaries and who will be able to complete the project with the funds provided.

Cultural specialists are often tremendously committed to their research and to a film about it. Because of this, they may be moved to "help" the film's budget by offering their services for a low stipend or for no pay at all. This is not a viable plan and should be avoided if possible. Unless they are independently wealthy, people who are not paid must ultimately cease working. When work stops, so does progress on the film. Considering the number of months of work that are required, both collaborators must receive a living wage to insure that the project will be completed.

Budgeting and cost estimating are approximate arts. Should extra funds be available in the budget for any particular category, allowance should be made for this money to be returned to the contingency fund category, discussed below. If too few funds are available, the contingency fund may provide remuneration.

An important budget decision for the collaborators to make in advance concerns how they will contend with shortages in the labor categories — the amount of time they are willing to work without pay, and the point at which they must cease work and begin fundraising.

Ten percent or more of film budgets normally is assigned to office maintenance — the cost of doing business. This fee will probably be paid to the filmmaking collaborator, who is most likely to make most of the purchases and whose film business must be maintained during the period of work. Collaborators should agree on the percentage to be requested from funding agencies for this category.

The cultural specialist with little business experience may not see justice in an office maintenance fee figured as a percentage of each direct expense. Small and large purchases that require identical office work would pay the filmmaker differently; purchases such as the folklorist's train tickets which require virtually no work, would still render the filmmaker a fee.

From the filmmaker's perspective, the payment is necessary and just. Although the fee for office maintenance is figured as a percentage, it should really be considered the lump sum value of office work required for projects of a given size. If the cultural specialist belives that a particular percentage is too high a price to pay for office maintenance, the collaborators should discuss the filmmaker's needs in an uncertain profession rather than issues like train tickets.

In fact, the filmmaker does have need for this fee. It not only pays for the hours spent making purchases but also pays for maintaining the books, for doing payroll, for legal and accounting expenses, and for office rent and utilities.[15] The fee also helps to keep the filmmaker solvent in the sometimes long periods of time between jobs. Indeed, most free-lance filmmakers could not survive if their income for each job did not sustain them between jobs. All freelancers should consider billing for this category.

The office maintenance fee should be paid as a lump sum, not incrementally. Incremental payment requires unnecessary bookkeeping whenever funds are transferred to contingency.

Every film and video budget requires a substantial fund to pay unforeseen — unbudgeted — expenses. Like office maintenance, the contingency fund is figured as a percentage, usually between ten and twenty-five percent, of the direct costs of a film. It is a crucial budget category and is almost always emptied by the end of a project.

Unfortunately, many non-profit granting agencies do not recognize contingency as a legitimate budget category: project evaluators are wary of giving money for no specified purpose. Since collaborators have a real need to cover contingency expenses, they must contend with this problem. Many do so by preparing two budgets, one for themselves, one for the granting agency. The first lists all necessary budget items and their estimated costs; it includes a contingency fund line item, perhaps of fifteen percent. The second budget, submitted to the agency, lists all of the same items but inflates each one by fifteen percent. It does not include a contingency fund. The total of the two budgets are identical. When funding is received, the collaborators go back to their first budget and allocate resources accordingly.

Collaborators must agree in advance what they should do with contingency funds in the unlikely event that any remain after the project. Early

contributions should influence reallocation. If, for example, the filmmaker agrees to accept certain losses on the project — by working for low pay or by donating equipment — he or she should presumably be allowed to enjoy an equivalent percentage of remaining funds.

Written Descriptions of the Film

The first written description of the projected film will probably be a treatment written for a grant proposal. Treatments — which are present-tense descriptions of the images and sounds on screen — are arguably the most important part of the proposal. Less detailed than a script and more than a summary, its outline is a standard expositional medium of fundraising. A few books discuss documentary treatments in film proposals[16] and many more shed light on proposal writing in general.[17]

The treatment gives a sense of screen-immediacy. Because it is usually no more than three or four pages, it includes only high points of the film and a few poetic flights. In the midst of its scene-by-scene summary, the treatment describes the appearance of characters and locale, and gives a sense of the film's artistic landscape.

The treatment is not the place to justify a film's aesthetic or theoretical importance: such arguments belong elsewhere in the proposal. The treatment will be more compelling, however, if it does emphasize elements that have been described in the proposal's goals and objectives sections. Without seeming to do so, the treatment should show how specific elements of the film fulfill the promises made earlier in the proposal.

Proposal writers apply only to those agencies whose priorities match those of their film. They also find ways in good conscience to cast their project in the specific language preferred by each agency. A consequence of this is that the same film may be described quite differently in treatments submitted to different organizations. To assist proposal writers, some organizations release copies of proposals which they have funded. Virtually all publish their funding priorities. An annual listing of thousands of non-profit grant recipients is available from The Foundation Center *(see n. 17)*.

The treatment is probably the most important element of a film proposal: it may be the only part that all reviewers read. Ideally, it represents what is best about the collaboration. The social scientist's intimate knowledge of the subject must come through, as must the filmmaker's ability to depict with elegant visuals and sound. Readers will be experienced in evaluating both aspects. Like all descriptions of documentary films written before actual production, the treatment is understood to be a rough estimate, as valuable for demonstrating the collaborative imagination of the writers as the accuracy of their predictions. Experienced reviewers understand the anticipatory status of the treatment.

Once funding is received, the treatment must be transformed into a detailed plan for filming. In documentary work, this plan must take two approaches in light of the fact that the material to be filmed must itself be divided into two rough categories, controllable and uncontrollable sub-

jects. Storyboards for controllable events and shopping lists for uncontrollable events will be discussed.

Controllable subjects can be tightly scripted. These subjects include inanimate objects — architecture, landscapes and artifacts — and also include animate material — such as interviews — in which the subjects actively cooperate with the filmmakers. For controllable material, collaborators may create a very precise storyboard which they can reasonably expect to duplicate on film.

A storyboard is a series of drawings (with accompanying verbal descriptions) that depict each shot of a film in the order that it appears on screen. The drawings indicate where the camera should be placed and what the composition of each shot should be.

Collaborating on the storyboard in preproduction, an unpressured stage of the project, will be valuable for both parties. For the filmmaker, the lengthy discussions that must take place before decisions for the storyboard are made are the main opportunity to learn the theoretical and factual bases of the film. This training will be most important when, in the press of events, the filmmaker must be turned loose from the storyboard to shoot spontaneously: it will heighten the sensitivity and curb the creative extravagances of the filmmaker.

"A film is made of tiny separate shots and sounds that must be gathered separately but put together as if they always belonged that way."

For the cultural specialist, collaborating in the creation of a storyboard with the filmmaker permits a leisurely opportunity to vie with the problems of visual thinking. Non-filmmakers have difficulty thinking of films as contructions. (Indeed, a dominant editing practice of films is to "hide the cut," to minimize the viewers' conscious awareness that a cut has occurred.) A storyboard makes each cut painfully obvious, and makes the fussy necessities of shooting with the intention of editing the film-construction easier to understand. In short, by preparing individual sketches of each shot, the area-specialist can begin to learn the "mysterious basic truth of filmmaking:" a film is made of tiny separate shots and sounds that must be gathered separately but put together as if they always belonged that way.

The second type of material to be filmed in documentary work is that which cannot be storyboarded because it cannot be anticipated with much accuracy. This includes the majority of non-recurrent events.* Even when the event is anticipated and expected to be filmed, it may be largely uncontrollable. Much as the cinematographer and sound recordist would like to occupy the "perfect location" sketched in a storyboard, they usually are forced to take any cubbyhole that they can find and be grateful for it.

To make matters worse, if spontaneous filming of events is often rewarding, it is also a situation in which the filmmaker and cultural specialist

communicate most poorly. Events require immediate response by the filmmaker, leaving no time for discussion. Because of this, the filmmaker must be informed about contingent attributes of the subject that may present themselves for unscheduled filming. This information can guide the camera at times when discussion is precluded by the rush of events.

More than this instruction and as a consequence of the fact that storyboards are often useless, the preferred preparation technique for collaborators is the shopping list. This is a written itemization of all uncontrollable events that the collaborators would like to have recorded on film. The shopping list may be thought of as a formal wish list, since only luck and tenacity will realize it. The filmmakers, viewing the field as their supermarket, enter and shoot material on the list whenever it is encountered in the aisles of experience. Because filmmakers do not know when, where, or if the material will be found, their best preparation cannot provide more than the shopping list's constant reminder that it is desired.

What the Collaborators Will Not Like About Each Other in the Field

From the point of view of the cultural specialist, filmmakers have a number of disturbing characteristics which often become noticeable in the field. Inter-collaborator conflicts stem from different training and expectations: meditation and frequent dialogue can help diminish them.

Among other things, the filmmaker is not likely to be sophisticated about the film's subject or its theoretical anaylsis. Tied with this may be a complacency with stereotypes and *idees fixes* about the culture. When challenged, filmmakers may defend their ignorance with the assertion that, in it, they are like the future viewers of the film. This argument may well be true, and it suggests that the best antidote is not only continuing the education of the filmmaker — often an exhausting project (Conners 1988) — but also taking advantage of the situation by improving the script whenever potential misunderstandings of its message become apparent.

A related and equally frustrating property of filmmakers is their commitment to recording pretty pictures, sometimes at the expense of what the ethnographer regards as the integrity of the subject. The battle between "a good film" and "ethnographic purity" is long-lasting. To contend with differences of opinion, the cultural specialist might keep in mind the idea that something which is boring or ugly will not make an interesting film. The filmmaker should realize that certain ideas deserve to be put on film precisely because they are difficult and unfamiliar: if a vital aspect of the subject is not pretty or flashy, filming it well should be a challenge.

To minimize differences of opinion in the field, the collaborators should begin their work — at the proposal stage — with an analysis of the intended audience's knowledge and sophistication about the subject of the film.

Filmmakers can alienate their academic collaborators if they attempt to bulldoze filming decisions. The cinematographer may wish to shoot an event which the cultural expert considers to be inappropriate. Again, the

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conflict results from different professional experiences. In the United States, possession of an expensive camera, with or without a Press Pass, permits the most egregious incursions. Western filmmakers are aware of this fact and use it to their own ends. Experts in different culture-areas, on the other hand, are aware that the liberties taken by United States media personnel are not acceptable elsewhere.[18]

Some assertiveness, when one wishes to film, is not necessarily inappropriate. As is discussed more fully below, the cultural specialist may take caution to an unwarranted extreme, protecting the subjects paternalistically. Film collaborators must have the courage of their convictions: if they believe that a film should be made, they are committed to some inconveniencing of people and to the belief that this is justified. Especially if a film makes political or moral statements on their behalf, the subjects often develop a strong interest in its completion themselves and are willing to undergo considerable discomfort to that end.

Bossiness is an occupational hazard of film directing. Cultural specialists who make casual script suggestions during filming are likely to feel shocked if they are angrily and preemptively dismissed. This type of filmmaker surliness is a consequence of the "mysterious basic truth," given above. In the heat of shooting, the filmmaker can only think of the tiny audio-visual snippets which must be collected. Particularly at such moments, he or she is likely to be brusque when presented with suggestions that do not refer to specific images and sounds.

To counteract this trait, collaborators should time the revelation of their suggestions, and consider them well before revealing them. When possible, abstract ideas should be buttressed with visual applications. If a major addition to the film is contemplated, new ideas should be presented as scenes — unified collections of images and sounds.

Because the recording technology lies firmly in the hands of the filmmaker, an aggressive advantage can lie there too. Filmmakers who themselves want final control over the film may attempt to prevent the cultural specialist from gaining film expertise through technological or terminological obscurantism. This unfortunately characterizes many interactions between male filmmakers and female cultural specialists.

Filmmakers also suffer in the situations described above. When a film novice makes suggestions that cannot be followed, technical terms of explanation naturally come to mind. If these terms are not known by the novice, there is no time during filming to prepare a remedial lecture. Cultural specialists are therefore strongly urged to acquire a basic education in film terminology and the rules of film editing before entering the field for production.[19]

Filmmakers are likely to be annoyed by the fact that their collaborators have no sense of cinematic quality standards. Unless they are constantly restrained, they will be satisfied with very poor picture and sound. Novices are likely to evince frustration and annoyance at the slowness of achieving high standards: indeed, no one could guess that lighting a scene takes nine-

ty minutes or that fifteen seconds of usable film require three hours to shoot. In order to adjust to the surrealistic slowness and fussiness of filming, the cultural specialist should request an invitation to a non-stressful documentary shoot that takes place before departure to the field.

Film novices are also prone to be troublesome in the field because they hold the false belief that documentary films are made without disturbing people. Indeed, the illusion that the documentary filmmaker is an invisible fly-on-the-wall is a major stylistic conceit of the genre. Taking the illusion for the reality, ethnographers may promise the subjects of the film that they will hardly be bothered in the process. This is far from true. The impression of invisibility, like other impressions in the cinema, can only be achieved through severe inconvenience. Tedious cooperation by the subject is a necessary requirement. As was mentioned, film subjects are usually happy to put up with the inconvenience: they want the film to be made and are interested in seeing how this is done.

Another potential conflict, also mentioned above, is the cultural specialist's adoption of paternalistic attitudes toward the subjects of the film. These attitudes are manifested in several ways, the most important of which concerns doubting the subjects' ability to understand the implications of the release form, a legal document which permits the unrestricted use of a person's recorded voice and image. The cultural specialist may fear that certain adults (those, for example, who are illiterate or ignorant of the ways of the First World) might give permission without understanding the risks that are involved. To the filmmaker, this is maddening. Once this form is signed, filmmakers tend to consider the matter closed: informed consent has been received.

The question of release forms opens the question of professional ethics and the ethics of making any film. Needless to say, collaborators should attempt to anticipate negative consequences of making and distributing a film long before going to the field. They may then explain the potential dangers to the subjects: this, I believe, should create the best chance that consent will be informed. But the subjects should not be protected from being allowed to make their own decisions. Denying them the opportunity to take an informed risk is paternalistic.[20]

What Collaborators Will Like About Each Other

Film collaboration allows folklorists, anthropologists and other experts in culture first to see concrete expression of their ideas and then to present them visually to many other people. The filmmaker is a colleague and an expert guide who makes the presentation possible. Filmmakers, too, know that a collaborative documentary is only possible because of years of fieldwork and thought. The folklorist's art, ideas, contacts and goodwill create the opportunity for what occurs before the lens.

Then months of preparations go by. In the field, a moment comes during the last few weeks — a key sequence is shot and all the pieces start to fall in place. Through it the filmmaker is much closer to the ideas, the

folklorist is much closer to the imagery. At that point, all the trouble seems worthwhile. The two arts merge. Collaboration has become a dance — each step reciprocal, each guided by both dancers.

GLOSSARY

Broadcast quality: A technical description of video image quality that satisfies FCC requirements for television broadcast, achievable only through the use of high-end video cameras and recorders. Less expensive video formats — like VHS, Beta and Low-end U-Matic (¾") — do not achieve this standard. The term is also used loosely to refer to a desired "crispness" of image quality. Although video pictures from any video camera can be altered to meet the FCC's technical specifications, they cannot be reconstituted with "crispness." For this reason, material shot on low-end equipment is rarely attractive to critical television programmers or distributors. Professional video-makers rarely use them. Like high-end video, 16mm film, when appropriately transferred to videotape, does have the "crispness" and the technical specifications demanded by professionals.

Documentary: As used in this essay, a type of footage or film which is shot catch-as-catch-can of relatively uncontrolled and relatively unpredictable events. Contrasts with "fictional" footage or films which are highly controlled. See "Non-recurrent phenomena*"

Double-system: A normal technique of 16mm production in which sync-sound* is recorded on a tape machine and is completely independent of the motion picture camera. 16mm editing is also conducted with sound running on a strand (called mag film*) that is separate from picture. Video is sometimes recorded double-system but more often image and sound are recorded together on one strand of videotape.

Mag (magnetic) film: A plastic film coated with iron oxide particles on which sound may be recorded, used in the editing and sound-mixing stages of filmmaking. 16mm mag film is identical in shape to 16mm picture film. Both have sprocket holes which keep them in sync with each other.

Non-recurrent phenomena: A phrase coined by Sorenson and Jablanko (1975) to describe events in which people, knowing that they are being filmed, go about their business in relative disregard of the effort to film them. They are not requested to perform or repeat activities for the camera. The camera crew therefore operates under documentary* conditions: it is expected to shoot catch-as-catch-can.

Original: The 16mm film which runs through the camera during production. A workprint* copy of it must be made because original is too easily scratched to be used in editing.

Shooting ratio: The proportion of film originally shot in a production to film actually used in the finished program. A 20:1 shooting ratio is not unusual in documentary productions.

Sync (synchronous) sound: A property of film and video in which sound is recorded, edited and heard synchronously with picture. Sometimes called **lip sync.**

Workprint: A working copy of the 16mm film original* or videotape on which an original recording was made. Workprints are made for purposes of editing to prevent the original from being damaged.

FOOTNOTES

I would like to thank Ivan Drufovka-Restrepo, Karen D. Lux and Phillips Stevens, Jr. for their help in the formulation of the ideas expressed here.

1. In the past ten years, I have worked in the capacity of director/cinematographer on the following collaborations: *The Maasai Film Project* (dispute settlement, culture change and the epistemology of filmmaking — Tanzania), with anthropologist Peter Rigby and photographer Richard Cross; *The Mulid: An Egyptian Saint's Festival* (religious syncretism in a saint's festival — Upper Egypt) camera only, with folklorist Elizabeth Wickett; *Ka Tet: Voces de la Tierra* (deforestation and ethnocide on an Indian reservation — Costa Rica) with Latin Americanist Ivan Drufovka-Restrepo; *I'm Not Prejudiced, But . . . Korean Groceries in Black Neighborhoods* (the economics of racism — Philadelphia), with anthropologists Hong-Joon Kim and Constance Dry; *God's Mother is the Morning Star* (history, artistic production and religious views of a 91-year old Lithuanian immigrant — Ithaca, New York), with folklorist Karen D. Lux; *AIDS in the Barrio* (Puerto Rican AIDS education — Philadelphia) with Drufovka-Restrepo and Frances Negron. With anthropologists David Plath and Jacquetta Hill, Drufovka-Restrepo and I are currently scripting a film about the shellfish-diving *ama* of Japan.
2. Filmmaking terms followed by an asterisk are defined briefly in the Glossary. Readers with a knowledge of filmmaking may ignore these references.

3. Wages are negotiable and exceptions — principally among young filmmakers, as will be discussed — may be found. To insure the completion of the film, however, the collaborators' salaries cannot be allowed to fall below a living wage.

4. At 1989 prices, ten hours of Super-VHS (S-VHS) raw stock (including a workprint* copy) would cost less than $250. The equivalent prices for U-Matic (¾") videotape would be about $750. If the production were made in 16mm, however, the cost for original* film and a double-system* workprint would be about $11,000. Including other necessary expenses for production — ¼" recording tape, magnetic film* and workprint* — 16mm currently costs about $.30 per second to run the camera.

5. In a very useful comparative analysis of budgets, Wiese (1984b:137-168) estimates that broadcast-quality* documentary video production costs are only 12% less than those for 16mm film.

6. Costs for per diem, equipment rental and transportation vary tremendously depending upon the particular circumstances of the production. The estimates here are based on a ten-week shoot in the United States for which an apartment for the crew is rented.

7. This figures covers only equipment theft insurance. Under the best of circumstances, Workman's Compensation and film Errors and Omissions Insurance would also be purchased. The two would cost an additional $7,500. (For more on film insurance, see Biella 1985).

8. One should be cautious of a filmmaker who does not have samples of recent work. Granting agencies will certainly require samples before they consider giving funds.

9. The filmmaker should judge whether the folklorist's publications are intelligible to a layman. If they are not, the author may have difficulty collaborating in a medium which serves a large public.

10. Blakeley and Blakeley (1989) provide contact information and a summary of works by many practicing anthropological filmmakers. A less direct way to find filmmakers is through a search of film reviews. (The method is indirect because reviews provide only the film distributor's address. Through inquiries to distributors, the filmmakers themselves can be traced.) For a list of films by culture-area, see Curtione (1984) and Heider (1983). Reviews of recent productions can be found in *The American Journal of Folklore*, *American Anthropologist*, *Visual Anthropology*, *Visual Sociology Review*, *SVA News: The Society for Visual Anthropology* and *CVA News: Commission on Visual Anthropology*. Many ethnographic films are briefly described in the annual announcements of the Robert Flaherty Seminar (contact: International Film Seminars; 305 W. 21st Street; New York, NY 10011) and the Margaret Mead Film Festival (contact: American Museum of Natural History; Central Park West at 79th Street; New York, NY 10024-5192).

    If non-academic, independent filmmakers are sought for collaboration, a broad spectrum may be notified through advertisement in *The Independent*, a widely-read journal that publishes a monthly list of film and video production opportunities. (The fee is $20 for a two-hundred-fifty character, double-spaced message; contact: FIVF; 625 Broadway, 9th Floor; New York, NY 10012.)

    I would welcome inquiries about possible collaboration. I can be reached at: Documentary Film; 4917 Hazel Avenue; Philadelphia, PA 19143-2004; tel. (215)748-4097.

11. Graduate level programs with training in Visual Anthropology may be found at the University of Southern California, under the directorship of Timothy Asch; Temple University, under Richard Chalfen; New York University, under Faye Ginzberg; and Manchester University, under Paul Henley. The Anthropological Film Center in Santa Fe, under Carroll and Joan Williams, conducts a year-long program in ethnographic film production. For related programs at other institutions, see Marks (1988).

12. Among filmmakers, the task of circumventing a client's desire for control has reached folkloric proportions. Filmmakers tell each other stories about how quickly they ran a client out of the office so that they could begin to get the work done themselves. These stories always end happily: "Of course, the client loved the film!"

13. The fiction that the cultural specialist is director or co-director of a film will weaken the filmmaker's ability to exert executive authority. This will effect the attitude of the crew and will make filming more difficult. The fiction may also tempt a cultural specialist to exercise authority which is not merited by qualification. If the more appropriate job description discussed in the text leaves the cultural specialist with the desire for more authority, then his or her solution is an apprenticeship to learn the director's skills before attempting to perform them.

14. An exhaustive discussion of budgets is found in Wiese (1984b). For a different perspective, see also London (1977, 1985).

15. Even if an external non-profit sponsor donates bookkeeping and other Indirect Costs, the collaborators are still required to keep extensive financial records for the IRS.

16. See, for example: Gregory (1979), Jackson, et al. (1981) — which may be purchased for $15 plus applicable sales tax from: Documentary Research, Inc.; 96 Rumsey Road; Buffalo, NY 14209 — and Wiese (1984a). Less useful is Penny (1978) — available from: Film Grants Research; P.O. Box 1138; Santa Barbara, CA 93102.

17. For a wealth of resources, see publications available from The Foundation Center, an organization with a large base of material on non-profit organizations, grants and grant proposal writing. Depositories exist in the main-branch public libraries of many major cities in the U.S. National Headquarters are located at 888 Seventh Ave.; New York, NY 10106; tel. (800)424-8936.

18. This point was made strikingly clear to me in Tanzania when I was forbidden to record a meeting of Ilparakuyo Maasai elders. Defining me in their own social categories, they considered me to be a member of an age-set that was too young to attend their meeting. At the time, I felt that they were behaving inappropriately: I should have been welcomed as a member of the press! Later I realized that being rejected on the basis of my "age-set" was just as appropriate in their culture as is being rejected from top secret meetings on the basis of a low "security clearance" in my culture.
19. In my view, textbooks about editing provide the best insight into documentary film conception. The best I can recommend is Reisz and Millar, (1968). Although this book is non-theoretical and describes fiction filmmaking's nuts and bolts, I consider it to be required reading for anyone who contemplates collaboration on a documentary project. Editing and shooting in the two genres are often very similar. Useful as an introduction to history and style in documentaries is Jacobs (1979). No reading list is more important than spending several days editing with a filmmaker before departure for the field.
20. The problem of paternalism is independent from cases in which the cultural specialist avoids making a request because it is locally considered impolite to do so if the response is likely to be negative. In such a case, the filmmaker, a foreigner whose transgressions of delicacy can be more easily ignored, may be given the job of wooing the subject and then making the request. This technique is advantageous to filmmakers who find that the cultural specialist accepts a rejection with too little fight.

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Fieldwork Among White Russian Emigres: Some Conceptual Considerations

PETER VOORHEIS

Shortly after seizing power from Russia's Provisional Government in 1917, the Bolshevik regime began a campaign of terror against all potential sources of dissent, the aristocracy in particular. Many of the high-born were assassinated outright, others died more slowly in captivity or survived only to be swept away by Stalin's purges of the 1930s. A significant number, however, having cast their lots with the White Russian armies opposing the new regime, were able to escape the country in the late 'teens and early 'twenties before the Red Army's eventual victory in the Russian Civil War.

In the several countries where they sought refuge, the displaced Russians formed communities whose cohesiveness at first owed much to shared dreams of being called on to retake power in the impoverished homeland. As the anticipated demise of Bolshevism dragged on indefinitely, this early political concern gave way to a cultural one. Since it was becoming more and more clear that the Bolsheviks were intent on destroying the pre-revolutionary culture of Russia — the Russian lyrics to the Communist International note that "we will tear the entire world down to its foundations, and then we will build our own, new world" — the Orthodox Russian communities in exile took on the task of preserving that culture for posterity.

"Orthodox Russian communities in exile took on the task of preserving their culture for posterity."

Among the new homes chosen by the exiles was the Glen Cove-Sea Cliff area of Long Island's North Shore, where Russians have been gradually migrating since shortly after 1917. As Russia's upper class had become quite cosmopolitan by that time, it is not surprising that some of its members would be acquainted with wealthy Americans of Long Island's "Gold Coast," who encouraged them to move to the area, part of which had the additional attraction of being reminiscent of St. Petersburg and other Russian cities. By the early 1940s, Russians had arrived in sufficient numbers that they were able to form the Church of Our Lady of Kazan, whose parishioners, not all of whom were aristocrats, converted from a garage.

Especially in the villages, social and cultural life in Russia had revolved around the church, whose role in this respect became even more important in the emigre communities. The presence of a church in Sea Cliff helped attract additional Russians, not only from the Soviet Union, but also from other emigre communities around the world. Since that time, divisions at the national and local level have led to the formation of two other Orthodox churches in the area; a fourth is intended primarily to serve a next-door home for Russian aged.

The churches have stimulated traditional artistic activity in two ways. First, the church buildings themselves are adorned outside and especially inside with intricate ornamentation — woodwork, icons, crosses, and embroideries — much of which was produced by congregation members. Second, most of the traditional Russian art work produced by the community is donated to the church to be sold at fundraising events. Below is a sampling of currently active artists.

Zhenya was born to Russian immigrants in the 1920s. Raised amid the Russian traditions of her parents, she felt under considerable pressure to assimilate into the mainstream American culture, as she was the only Russian in what she terms a "wasp" neighborhood of Oceanside, Long Island. Her mother taught her to embroider, but she eventually moved away from the traditional Russian techniques in favor of Pennsylvania Dutch-style quilting. Except for her membership in the Russian Orthodox Church, her ethnicity played a minor role in her early adulthood. After she was widowed, however, she married her current husband, also a Russian-American, and the two helped reinforce each other's latent ethnicity (he took balalaika lessons, for example). For the past fifteen years or so, Zhenya has devoted the months between January and Easter to painting wooden eggs for her church's annual bazaar. A self-taught artist, she paints her eggs quickly in an abstract style, adding the Cyrillic initials for "Christ has risen" on each one. Her eggs are meant to be sold at low prices at the bazaar, functioning as "nickel and dime" items as opposed to the more intricately designed, and hence more costly eggs of other artists.

Elena, who says she has always sewn, makes traditional Russian costumes for dolls. In 1943 she left Russia, where her grandmother and aunts were "always doing something" like crocheting, sewing or embroidery (her schoolteacher mother had no time for these activities). Her costumes are made exclusively for the church bazaar.

Dimitry is a self-taught graphics artist whose grandparents were high Russian nobles. The grandmother's fame as a miniaturist led to connections with the North Shore nabobery and to the family's settling in the area as one of the original group of Russian emigres. Many of Dimitry's graphics, either handpainted or printed from hand-carved wood blocks, are done in the style of pre-revolutionary illustrations with which he has been familiar since childhood.

Olga is a recent emigre who was a professional artist in Russia. Arriving in Glen Cove, she was quickly absorbed into the local Russian com-

munity and was struck by its preservation of cultural traditions discouraged for many years in the Soviet Union. Her painted wooden eggs, usually depicting scenes from Russian fairy tales, are among the most sought-after items produced by area Russians. While she has donated some to the church, she also sells many for herself.

Nina is that phenomenon often encountered by folkartists in the field: the prime informant to whom all routes of investigation eventually lead back. While I was conducting fieldwork in the community, the advice of virtually every Russian I spoke was "you must talk to Nina." Born in the late 1940s into a Russian emigre community in Venezuela, Nina moved to Long Island at the age of ten. Like most of the other artists, she is self-taught, and says that she began making "traditional" items in her early twenties when she noticed that very little of this type of material was being made in the area. Aside from being one of the most productive artists among the Russians, specializing in painted wooden eggs and lacquered boxes, she is the prime catalyst for the community's artistic activity as she organizes other artists and encourages their involvement in raising funds for the church, particularly at the time of her church's Easter bazaar. Her role is so crucial, in fact, that there are several individuals in the community who would produce little or no art at all were it not for her continuous prodding.

In working with this community, I have had occasion to address two matters that have intermittently crossed my mind since beginning public sector work full time in 1986. The first concerns the extent to which our obligation to present the results of our fieldwork in public, rather than simply filing them away in an obscure drawer, can affect our practical definitions of what folk art is. The second has to do with whether, in making definitional judgments, American folklorists grant more latitude to members of ethnic groups than to those with no particular ethnic background.

When analyzing the results of his investigation, the public sector folklorist must give priority to justifying the classification of the materials and individuals he has encountered as folk art and folk artists, to himself and to other folklorists, particularly to those employed by his funding sources. In my own case, this process has sometimes involved some Procrustean attempts which eventually I am obliged to abandon in favor of a clear conscience or because of fear of ridicule. In the case of this project, such extremes proved unnecessary. The North Shore Russians are a cohesive community with a shared cultural experience. Thematically, much of the art reflects an essentially oral tradition: a venerable Easter greeting is embroidered, for example, or a fairy tale heard as a child is painted on a wooden egg. Most importantly, the Russians themselves have a collective sense of this art as an expression of the pre-revolutionary culture to which they are heirs — it is *their* art.

What makes these individuals less than textbook examples of folk artists is that except for the embroiderers, they did not have artistic techniques handed down to them. What has been handed down instead is an

ardent sense of Russianness, reflected especially in their attachment to the church and the preservation of the language. We have, then, the inheritance of a traditional culture, with its distinctive world view, and the emergence of artistic traditions that are suited to this culture's needs. Among the public sector folklorists of my acquaintance, all of whom agree that textbook examples of folk artists are rarely met with in the real world anyway, there are few if any who would object to the inclusion of such artists in a folk art exhibit. After all, we tell ourselves, folk art exists on a continuum with other types of art and the lines between them can seldom be drawn very sharply. It is our job to extract the traditionality or folk elements of the art we find and to present this aspect of it to the public.

Even so, since becoming a public sector folklorist in 1986, I have felt a vague uneasiness, and sensed the same among some of my colleagues, concerning the presentation of materials that we consider to be in the gray areas between folk art and popular or fine art. We sometimes have doubts over whether we have altered our original concept of folklore — usually the one we learned in graduate school — in order to satisfy the exigencies of a particular project. In my case, for example, the inevitable time lag involved between the proposal for a presentation and the decision on the project's funding came close to stimulating some creativity on my part that could have been construed as humbuggery. An application for a grant to conduct fieldwork among the North Shore Russians, intended to result in a slide presentation of their traditional arts, was submitted in February 1987 and approved by the New York State Council on the Arts Folk Arts Program. By the time I was called in to conduct twenty days of fieldwork in the summer of 1988, a second application for a grant to fund additional fieldwork and a gallery exhibition of the Russians' folk art in 1989 had already been submitted. This application was approved after I revised it and submitted slides representing the results of the 1988 fieldwork, even though at the time I did not believe I had located enough material to organize a proper exhibit and was not certain that the time alotted for additional fieldwork, fifteen days, would improve the situation. In fact, a decent exhibit did come out of this, in the Fall of 1989, after I was able to gather additional material at the eleventh hour with the indispensable aid of Nina. Shortly before that, however, I had been considering two options. The first was to make do with the relatively small amount of available material I considered "genuine," all the while planning on countering the understandable disappointment on the part of my funding source with some elaborate reference to squeezing blood out of a turnip. The other, which I probably would have opted for, was to include material I considered inappropriate for a folk arts exhibit — abstract art incorporating traditional Russian designs elements, for example, or costumes and scenery made by the community for a festival celebrating the Russian church's 1988 millennium — which would provide some insight into the community's development, serve as a contrast to the actual folk art in defining its traditionality for the public, and, of course, take up space.

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While I ended up with sufficient material to render both of these options unnecessary, there were admittedly a few items included in the exhibit that are in the aforementioned gray area. Olga's eggs, for example, might be more suited to a fine art exhibit, since she is a professionally trained artist who began painting eggs only after arriving in this country a few years ago. In an experience not uncommon to Russian emigres, however, she has quickly been absorbed into the local Russian community, whose members consider her one of their own. She is also considered one of the community's best artists, and by extension, one of the best representatives of its culture. Because her own community makes no distinction between her work and that of anyone else on the basis of which artist received formal training, it follows that the important academic distinction between folk art and fine art that we often make on this basis can, under certain circumstances, become nearly meaningless when we get into the field. The solution to definitional crises such as these may be solved by paying attention to how the art functions within the community more than on how the artist learned to produce it.

"The solution to definitional crises may lie in paying attention to how the art functions in the community."

To address the matter of whether we are prone to allowing more latitude in our definition of folk art when dealing with ethnic groups, let us hypothetically transfer Olga's work into a smiliar, though non-ethnic context. I was told a few years ago about a group of duck hunters from northern New York, who carry on a decoy-carving tradition handed down to them over several generations. Several years ago, a city-bred individual who had never hunted or carved and had neither of these traditional pursuits in his cultural background moved to the area and took up duck hunting. As he became more involved in hunting, he gravitated socially toward the decoy carvers, who taught him some of their techniques and generally came to welcome him as one of their group. Today the outsider is one of the premiere decoy carvers of the group, whose members evidently see no distinction between themselves and him in a cultural sense or between his decoys and theirs in terms of validity.

This distinction would be left to be made by the folklorist, who would experience some trepidation when deciding whether to present such a "revivalist's" work in a folk art exhibit. A suitable solution to the problem would be to include his decoys along with those of the men who taught him the tradition, providing some information on his background, enough to make it clear to the public that his relation to the tradition is somewhat different than that of the other carvers, but without making so much of an issue as might cause offense.

When I first met with Olga, I learned of her fine arts background and the fact that she had not painted eggs in Russia. I was not fluent enough in Russian to ascertain whether she had any direct relationship to this tradi-

tion at all, so I had to base my assumptions concerning her work partly on my knowledge of Soviet culture. The difference, as I saw it, between her work and that of the Russians raised in America was that as far as I could determine the culture of old Russia had not been an essential part of her upbringing. Someone raised in the Soviet Union, which has trotted out this culture primarily for tourists or when its leaders see some benefit in doing so (as when Stalin temporarily resurrected it during the German invasion of 1941), would have roughly the same relation to it as a modern citizen of Atlanta to the plantation culture of Scarlett O'Hara. My first thought was that I might be bound to present her work as a "revivalist," if I presented it at all; my second was to contrive a rationale for glossing over the matter entirely. A suitable rationale quickly came to mind. It happens that the Russian language has no corresponding term for *folk*, either in its everyday use as referring to a particular style, or in the sense that it is used by American academically trained folklorists in reference to the informally learned traditionals of specific cultural groups. Russian *narod*, the dictionary equivalent, connotes the spirit of the Russian people as a whole, being in this sense close to German *Volk*. It is not surprising then, that neither in Russian folklorists nor in Russian-speaking communities would there be any serious distinction made between an academically trained artist and an informally trained one if they are both Russian and their products are similar. As a result, I squelched any doubts about presenting Olga's work without qualification by reminding myself that if the Russians made no distinction between the traditionality of her work and that of other artists, who am I to impose a foreign, longhair concept on their way of thinking?

In retrospect, the problem I have with reaching this decision is that I am not certain whether I believe it was correct, for I know I would have handled the outside decoy carver differently. I must admit that the decision to include Olga's work was made with the suspicion that we public sector folklorists really do have special latitude when presenting ethnic materials. This latitude can be understood in terms of a current focus, or fad, if you will, within American intellectual circles, on the matter of our country's cultural diversity, a focus that is not simply a reaction to a general change in the way Americans as a whole regard their own and others' ethnicity. What I think is happening instead is that by "celebrating" this diversity we are subconsciously or otherwise attempting to atone for our sense of guilt, fostered in us largely during our academic experiences, for being part of a mainstream society which we have been led to associate with cultural hegemony, myopia, and blandness.

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Adirondack Balsam Pillows: Folk Art, Tourist Art or Subsistence

TODD DeGARMO

If you are one of the multitude who have lived in or visited the Adirondack North Country of New York during the past fifty or sixty years, no doubt you are familiar with the Adirondack balsam pillow. It is one souvenir among the assortment of pennants, postcards, and other keepsakes a person would remember.

"No doubt you are familiar with the Adirondack balsam pillow.

The aroma would reach you first: a deep breath of the North Woods; a touch of evergreen to take you back to the summer's pleasures: balsam pillows. Sometimes misleadingly called "pine pillows," these souvenirs have always been stuffed with the chopped needles and twigs of the balsam fir (Abies balsamea). As one native told me, "The people from the city called it all 'pine.' They didn't realize that there's a difference between pine and balsam. But it was balsam!" (Butchino 1987). They came in an assortment of sizes, from the "mailer" (about 2x4" with an attached address card) to the sofa-cushion size with the hefty price tag. Many had printed muslin covers decorated with romantic scenes: a deer by a babbling brook or an Indian princess by a crystaline lake. And they bore verses: "I Pine For Thee & Sometimes Balsam," or "On the Trail of the Lonesome Pine," or "Souvenir of ..." Lake George, Lake Placid or some other popular vacation spot. Others were decorated with needlework (embroidery or quilting) or hand-painted. Frontier Town and Santa's Workshop always had a plentiful supply, as did many "Mom and Pop" stores, roadside stands, and tourist houses of the region.

In a world of easy categories, a souvenir like the balsam pillow would be labeled "tourist art" and cast aside as unworthy the attention of scholars of traditional culture. After all, it would be argued, if it is a souvenir, it must be cheap, mass-produced, throw-away culture, and more of the fleeting popular culture than the steadfast folk culture. As a folklorist, I am especially interested in those things that are not passing fancies of popular culture, things that are rooted in a culture with a tradition of do-

ing something a certain way. As a folklorist, I also believe that easy categories like "folk" and "popular" can get you in trouble if you are not careful. My job, as I see it, is to probe below the surface of labels and appearances, to take the trouble to understand the motivations and inspirations behind the things that people make and do. The Adirondack balsam pillow is an interesting case in point. On the surface it is a souvenir, made at one time on a grand scale to sell to tourists, a reminder of vacations in the mountains and an advertisement for next year's trip. It has also been an important source of income for families living year-round in a place traditionally providing very few employment opportunities beyond lumbering, mining, tourism, and small scale farming. To simply focus on one or another of these characterizations, would be to miss the reality of the balsam pillow phenomenon.

Adirondack Tourist Tradition

Richard Dorson has asked "Where is American folklore to be found?" and answered in part, "the one stipulation is that human beings must congregate and interact" (Dorson 1986:86). He also speaks of "national boundaries as contact points between different peoples and cultures" which can generate a "special folklore of cultural friction and political tension" (Dorson 1986:88). I would suggest that this general idea can also be applied to places within a country, like the Adirondacks, where people from different backgrounds have come together. Often this cultural friction is apparent. Natives have been treated by the visitors as servants or "noble savages," and tourists have been labeled by the natives as ignorant city folk. I am told there is an emerging tradition in the North River area where year-round folk get together on Labor Day to share a keg of beer, watch the cars traveling south, and generally celebrate the exodus of summer folk (Bond 1989). While glad to see them go, many of these natives depend upon these very same tourists to make a living.

The Adirondacks have a tradition of tourism that dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. For several generations this region has attracted visitors looking for a seasonal vacation spot. Local year-round residents quickly recognized these visitors as a source of income and sought to accommodate them, and various types of vacationers have come to the region over the years.

The tourist business in the Adirondacks can be divided roughly into three periods. First the sportsmen came to hunt the woods and fish the waters. These "sports," as they were called by the natives, were led and cared for by the "guides," natives who not only knew where the game could be found, but also could build a lean-to shelter, steer a guide-boat full of supplies and game, and entertain their employers with tall tales around the evening fire. The cult of the Adirondack guide captured the imagination of the visitors and much has been written over the years.

As the "wilderness experience" caught on in the public's imgination, the Adirondacks changed to meet the increased demand. Second the period

saw the rise of the large resorts alongside their smaller counterparts (the family-run tourist houses) during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The "great camps," those rustic mansions in the woods, were built at that time by wealthy industrialists. Traveling by railroad, stagecoach, and ferry, urbanites flocked to the Adirondacks. Usually whole families came for an extended stay, often for the whole summer.

Guiding was not the only way for a native to make money from seasonal visitors. Older residents recall their mothers peddling milk, butter and eggs camp to camp, and their own stints as waitresses and chambermaids. Vegetables and livestock were grown, and fish, deer and ice harvested to supply the resorts. Besides guiding, fathers built and cared for the camps, and drove visitors from the train stations. Recalled are childhoods of tending boats, cranking homemade ice cream, or leading summer visitors to the natural wonders of AuSable Chasm or the local beaver pond.

By the 1920s and thirties vacationing in the Adirondacks had changed due to the growth of automobiles and paved highways. No longer were families staying in one resort for an entire summer. American society was on the move, as evidenced by mobile vacations where tourists would try to see as much as they could by car. Though the balsam pillow predates this time, it became an especially appropriate souvenir to this new Adirondack tourist who collected mementos of his journeys.

While there are many examples of cultural friction between generations of tourists and natives in the Adirondacks, sometimes generations of seasonal contact generate a common experience shared by tourist and native alike. The cultural friction in these cases disappears, and a new community is formed, not based on socio-economic, ethnic, or other backgrounds, but on the bond created by sharing the Adirondack North Country. Something as simple as a balsam pillow can be an expression of this new community. The essential ingredient of the pillows, aromatic fragrance of the balsam fir stuffing, is recognized by those who have spent time in the North Woods, and provides a reference point for both the seasonal and year-round resident. The collection *Adirondack Tales* records the story of a seemingly eccentric traveler to the Adirondacks who nonetheless understood the essence of the balsam pillow's appeal:

> There was a woman named Helen Bartlett Bridgman who wrote a travel book a long time ago. She said that when she was a little girl, she sat on the hard bench of a New England town hall and heard Adirondack Murray tell about the mountains. As he talked, she smelled white water lilies and the forest. The beauty of the description made her cry, and she vowed that she would not die until she had seen the wondrous land. Years later her dream came true. She was a passenger on the first train from the Grand Central to Old Forge. She spent the summer in the mountains, and made herself a balsam bag, which she carried through trains and carriages, to the dismay of conduc-

tors and coachmen. It was a big bag, and she tugged it bumping behind her. "Memory, through perfume," she told the bewildered trainmen, "has poignant power to leap to long-lost pleasure" (Early 1939:156-157).

The souvenir balsam pillow is perhaps seventy years old. Balsam fir's use in other Adirondack contexts is at least twice as old. In the wilderness lean-to, as a treatment for respiratory ailments, and as a popular Christmas tree, the balsam fir has provided the fragrant cue that has evoked memories of the Adirondack North Country for generations. These historical contexts can help us to understand the deep-rooted role of the balsam fragrance in the origins and popularity of the balsam pillow souvenir.

Part of the romance of the wilderness experience of nineteenth century camping in the Adirondacks involved sleeping on a rustic bed (made of balsam or some other evergreen) in an Adirondack lean-to or shanty. Paragraphs of Victorian prose penned by Adirondack visitors recount seemingly spiritual experiences while sleeping in the great northern wilderness. T.B. Thorpe wrote in 1859 for *Harper's Magazine*:

> The "floor" is next covered with hemlock boughs of two or three feet thickness, and no Sultana ever had a more fragrantly sweet or soft covering beneath her feet. Upon these boughs at night is placed a blanket, the hunter rolls himself up in another, the guides make a tremendous fire, and thus all comfortably lounge away the evening hours which precede luxurious sleep. (Thorpe 1859:170-171)

In the same year for the same magazine another visitor wrote:

> Then we had to cut and gather hemlock boughs for a mattress . . . Hours of fresh and pure delight were those of this first soft summer night in the calm fragrant woods . . . The katydids were in full orchestra, and the owls were telling their doleful tales, when, spreading a blanket upon our elastic bed of leaves, and adjusting over-coats for pillows, we at last went off to Dreamland (Richards 1859:316).

This scene is so often recounted by those telling of their Adirondack adventures, that almost twenty years later it is lampooned in Charles Dudley Warner's *In the Wilderness*. He begins with a detailed description of "aromatic" balsam beds ("in theory. . .elastic and consoling") in a lean-to filled with sleepers of "all sexes and ages," feet toward a roaring fire. He then proceeds to lampoon the romantic notion of a soothing sleep in such an arrangement:

> By and by we get our positions in the shanty for the night, and arrange the row of sleepers. The shanty has become a smokehouse by this time: waves of smoke roll into it from the fire. It is only by lying down, and getting the head well under the eaves, that one can breathe. No one can find her "things;" nobody has a pillow. . .more grumbling about the hardness of a handbag, or the insufficiency of a pocket-handkerchief for a

> pillow. Goodnight. Was that a remark?—something about a root, a stub in the ground sticking into the back. . .It needs but a moment for the conversation to become general,—about the roots under the shoulder, stubs in the back, a ridge on which it is impossible for the sleeper to balance, the non-elasticity of boughs, the hardness of the ground, the heat, the smoke, the chilly air (Warner 1878:80-83).

By the turn of the twentieth century instructions for making one's own balsam bed are found in books popularizing the traditions of woodsmanship. Daniel Carter Beard, founder of the Boy Scouts of America, advises in his version not to economize on the amount of twigs gathered. He then recounts the many times he awoke with aching bones due to a night's sleep on too thin a layer of balsam boughs (Beard 1972: 1-6).

Before the souvenir variety, balsam pillows seem to be part of this Adirondack tradition of using evergreens for sleeping or lounging. Edna West Teall (1881-1968) writes in her account of growing up in the Adirondacks in the 1880s, "Balsam had a rich fir fragrance so nice for a pillow. It carried the aroma indoors. Put your head on a balsam pillow, shut your eyes, and a feel of the forest went with you to the land o'dreams" (Teall 1970:22).

At least one Great Camp owned a balsam pillow during the 19th century. When William West Durant turned Camp Pine Knot over to Collis P. Huntington in 1895, among the hundreds of items listed in the inventory of furnishings is found "a cushion stuffed with balsam" in the "sitting room" (Gilborne 1981:23).

Another popular woodscraft and camping book seeing many editions advocates the use of a homemade evergreen pillow when sleeping in the woods. According to "Nessmuk" (the penname of George Washington Sears) the pillow is simply "half a yard of muslin, sewed up as a bag and filled with moss or hemlock browse" easily folded and pocketed when not in use (Sears 1920:20).

Such a hiker's pillow turns up in the Indian Lake region made by Borden H. Mills, who kept a diary of his trip to the region in 1904. Besides reconstructing balsam beds in several lean-tos, he notes on August 23:

> Cut lots of balsam after dinner and each made a balsam pillow; Fritz out of a cover he had brought specially, and I with a cover knocked together with a red "Dago" handkerchief and a square of canvas (Mills 1962:15).

The medical properties of balsam fir and its use in healing well into the 20th century cannot be ignored as an important link between the public's imagination and the popular souvenir. "Balsams" in medicine refers to those medicines which help alleviate ailments of the respiratory passages and lungs. Historically, plants found in nature with these properties often had "balsam" as part of their names. For balsam fir, the name is not undeserved. Balsam fir has been used by various tribes of American Indians at least since first contact with Europeans. Balsam pitch (or sap)

was one of the most valuable aboriginal remedies, used in infusions for colds, coughs, asthma, and consumption. The plant was also used in sweat baths, the greens placed on live coals and the fumes inhaled for colds. It was also used by many of the Northeastern tribes as a salve for cuts and sores. White frontier doctors eventually learned to use it, too, and it remained an official medicine of the USP from 1820 to 1916.

In recent memory balsam pitch has been gathered and used as medicine by North Country residents. Rev. Daisy Allen of Bakers Mills recalls a home remedy practiced by her husband Earl's Uncle Delbert that called for a bit of locally gathered balsam pitch mixed with a teaspoon of sugar to treat a cold. Another remedy called for a balsam pillow to be placed under the head of an elderly neighbor to enable easier breathing while she slept (Allen 1987). Another native recalls a story concerning the healing power of balsam pitch, a home remedy, she says, that everyone in the Adirondacks knew at one time:

> I remember my father telling me about some man was making pancakes in a lumbercamp. And they got to throwing the pancakes. And somebody took a pancake off the griddle and threw it and hit this guy on the arm. And before they could get it off (of course it was hot; it was cooking) it burned his arm. And it burned it good. It was a good big pancake. And they got the pancake off, and washed it, and went right out in the woods and got balsam pitch. Just the clear balsam pitch, and put it all over that, and he never had any trouble with it at all (Merwin 1989).

In Hamilton County stories are still told of Fred Smith's "Balsam Jel," a mixture of petroleum jelly and the balsam pitch collected by local children. The "jel" was sold among the souvenirs at the trailhead of Blue Mountain. Margaret Merwin was one of the children:

> We picked balsam for him. You'd go around and you'd take a needle, or most anything to puncture the buds on a balsam tree. And then you'd put the bottle on there and squeeze the balsam into it. . .The kids used to do it. And he paid them a little bit for it. They thought they were making big money if they got a dime, you know, back then (Merwin 1989).

Because of its traditional use in the treatment of respiratory ailments, balsam fir was once thought of as a cure for tuberculosis. An early claim comes from Adirondack Murray's *Adventures in the Wilderness*, the book said to have begun the widescale run of tourism on the region. Murray tells a story of a young man with an extreme case of tuberculosis who by sleeping on his bed of balsam and pine eventually returns to civilization a healed and vital man.

In 1879, at a meeting of the Medical Society of the State of New York, Dr. Alfred L. Loomis presented a paper with similar claims as to the beneficial properties of aromatic Adirondack evergreens:

> Pine, balsam, spruce, and hemlock trees abound, and the air

> is heavily laden with the resinous odors which they exhale. An agent which it is universally admitted exerts a most beneficial influence on diseased mucous membranes is thus brought in contact with the air passages, while balsamics, which are also disinfectants, purify the atomsphere, which is constantly impregnated with them (Loomis in Cook 1881:106).

The Victorian celebration of Christmas left its mark on New Yorkers' perception of the balsam fir and the Adirondacks. During Decembers in the 19th century large Christmas tree markets were found along the North River front on the west side near the piers, at the foot of Duane and Franklin Streets. Urban journalists of the day describe the area as transformed from an "unattractive place into woodland bowers, and filling the City air with their resinous fragrance," where busy city streets "seem forest roads, so lined are they with trees of spruce, balsam, pine and cedar, standing upright with their graceful top waving high in air, or piled like cord-wood along the sidewalks for blocks," (*New York Times* 1878:2).

In 1878 in the same newspaper, the Christmas tree suppliers are called "sturdy farmers" from Maine, New Jersey, the Catskills, Fulton County (the Adirondacks), and the Mohawk Valley. In 1893 it is the "woodsmen" mostly from the "north woods country of this state" who cut their trees in the woods, bundle and sledge them out to the nearest railway station. The principal dealers are reported to come from Herkimer County (the Adirondacks). Only halfway through the 1893 season, Herkimer County dealers are reported to have shipped eleven train carloads or about thirty thousand of the one hundred thousand trees sold so far that year. These trees were entirely "fragrant balsams and spruces, having entirely replaced the white cedar, the favorite tree of earlier years." The aroma of so many trees in the city had the usual effect on the urban dwellers we have seen so far as balsam is concerned, for the market was said to have been "a favorite spot for loungers. They come by parties, lie around on the fragrant boughs, and inhale the fragrant and pungent aroma of the trees," (*New York Times* 1893: 17).

Growing out of this historical context souvenir balsam pillows emerged. Portable and inexpensive to make and to buy, they became widespread throughout the Adirondacks during the 20th century. Many older local residents recall a cottage industry during the 1920s and '30s of sewing and stuffing pillows to sell out of the home. Others worked for one of several family-run wholesale manufacturers specializing in the pillow trade.

The Standard Supply Company in Otter Lake was one of these wholesalers. A family business selling novelties, gifts, and souvenirs, it was also one of the major suppliers of Adirondack balsam pillows from the 1920s until the 1950s. Three generations of Nortons have worked in the business.

John A. Norton (1874-1963) opened the shop in 1914. Born in Boonville on the western edge of the Adirondacks, he attended college in Buffalo. John A. became involved in a pharmacy before accepting his brother

Roscow's invitation to join him in the Adirondacks. Roscow owned a hotel and some three hundred acres in Otter Lake, and was attempting to form a community there. John A. began selling postcards, from local scenes he photographed onto glass negatives. The balsam pillow business is said to have started later, in the early 1920s.

Standard Supply Company made its own silk-screened pillow covers from this time until the 1950s when labor became too costly. John B.'s sister was the company's artist, creating hundreds of different designs. She would draw the pictures, and then cut out the series of stencils used to make the screens for the multi-colored covers, one screen for each color in the final print.

Then father and son, John A. and John B., would make the pillow covers in the shop behind the house. The cloth was bought twenty rolls at a time in New York City. The rolls of cloth were suspended over the four by twelve foot work table, where six-foot lengths of it were laid out in forty to fifty layers and cut into blocks. The blocks were silk screened by hand and laid to dry overnight on one of the fifteen four by six foot racks. Each color had to be applied separately and dried before the next color could be applied. This work was done all winter, all day long in the back shop kept warm with oil heat. Once screened and dried the final time, the blocks were sent back to the house where John B.'s sister sewed them into pillow covers, using an overlocking sewing machine with 3 needs and a set of knives.

The balsam was gathered by local people hired by the Nortons to cut branches eighteen to twenty inches in length. John B. would haul the branches to the shop, cut them and put them into fifty pound bags. The shop had an elaborate system of pulleys, shafts and flat belts run by a one-cylinder gasoline engine (until it was replaced by electricity in 1929) to run the "cutter" and the "blower." The "cutter" was an insulage cutter from the Paypeck Machinery Company in Shortsville. The branches were rough cut and forced up a tube by a homemade "blower" to the attic, where the rough was screened from the needles and dried a bit. The bin was then opened and the rough would drop back down to be recut. Over a ton of balsam was cut every week, to be used in the pillows or sold by the pound.

Fifty pound bags of cut balsam, empty pillow covers and filled pillows were sold throughout the Adirondack North Country. John A. Norton would travel to hotels and shops with a series of covers that showed step by step the silk-screening process (Norton 1987). Ida Winter remembers her mother buying the souvenirs sold by Mr. Norton to place in the office's showcase in her family's hotel in Big Moose. She especially remembers the mailers:

> They were 2 by 3 or so, with a string (or a ribbon), and a card, and you could mail it. You know, you'd just put a stamp on it. In those days it was probably a 3 cent stamp, and drop it in the mail and it would go. It was a souvenir of the Adirondacks. So, that's my first recollection of balsam pillows (Winter 1987).

Standard Supply Company also hired local families to fill some of their orders. They would supply pillow covers, boxes and sometimes cut balsam, and the families would stuff the pillows, sew the ends, and mail boxes of souvenirs to retailers. They would also sew some of their own covers, or buy and fill the Standard Supply covers to sell out of their homes. The children of these families are now senior citizens who still recall the process of gathering, cutting, stuffing and sewing, and marketing.

Grace Butchino grew up near Olmstedville in Essex County. Her father guided some in the winter, but because he didn't like farming, he got the family involved in the balsam pillow industry during the summer months. The family gathered and cut its own balsam. Grace recalls going into the woods as a girl to gather balsam:

> Right there on our property we owned quite a lot of land there were numerous balsam trees. . .You know, balsam will grow close to the ground. And you'd limb them from there up, you know, 6 or 8 feet, something like that. We had knives made from old scythe blades, set in a wooden handle, sharpened on the grindstone. You took the big boughs, and you took the smaller limbs from the big bough. . .Oh, once in a while you chopped yourself a little bit. But you know, there was something in the balsam, that you'd heal almost immediately (Butchino 1987).

Evelyn Pelletier's father owned a farm near Pottersville, Warren County, raising meat, poultry, vegetables, maple sugar and balsam Christmas trees:

> Now us children, and a neighbor boy who was about a year younger than I, we used to pick the balsam. Go by ourselves in the woods. And my father would pay us, I think, a cent a pound. A penny. But we would pick 10 or 20 pounds in half a day. We might take the horse with us, and tie the corners of two bags together, and then you could throw it over the horse's back. And the horse would carry it (Pelletier 1988).

If a family was without children, it could hire the neighbor's to gather the balsam. Lillian Nolette recalls working for the woman next door when she was ten years old, her sister was eight, and her brother six:

> I don't know how it got started but. . .we had to pick this balsam for this one woman who lived right over here. And she didn't want no twigs. She just wanted balsam. We had what they called a "Midland Bag." A grain bag. A big grain bag. Twenty-five cents we got. For that one bag. And that holded a lot. But, of course, we didn't have any money them days. I mean, it just wasn't there to get. . .But picking that balsam was hard work. Seventy-five cents for three of those big bags. And take me and my brother and my sister a long time to fill those three bags. . .Six hours, maybe. For seventy-five cents (Nolette 1989).

Sometimes men were hired to gather the balsam, if a business was large enough to support the expense. Evelyn Pelletier remembers that her

father also hired men to pick balsam: "He paid them more. In fact, they had special knives to cut it with. Knives that sort of had a hook on the end" (Pelletier 1988). These sound like pruning knives, of the kind used to prune limbs from fruit trees.

Margaret Merwin worked on pillows in the 1920s with her mother-in-law in Blue Mountain Lake:

> It's best to get the balsam in the full of the moon because there's more pitch in the needles, and in the buds. . .And the men got the boughs for us. We didn't have to worry about that too much. They'd take my father-in-law's truck and go and pick the boughs and pile 'em up handy so we could get them. It was fun (Merwin 1989).

Cutting the balsam (chopping it into small pieces) was usually the next step in the process. Simple operations such as that of Margaret Merwin's in-laws used an ax and chopping block:

> And they'd cut the boughs with scissors or trimming clippers, cut it up fresh right while the sap was still in it. We'd try not to get too much of the stalk in the thing, you know: the thick bough. But we did get the little tips and stuff. And sometimes if it was very good and tender bark, we'd peel that bark and cut it up in it. You know, just to give it more scent (Merwin 1989).

Most of the larger operations used a cutter, usually the type ordinarily used to cut feed or silage for farm animals:

> We had a corn cutter, and you'd run it (the balsam) through the corn cutter, you'd cut it fine, you know. . .the shivs, the little needles would drop down underneath. That's what the little mailers were filled with. Just the little needles. The others were fine cut pieces (Butchino 1987).

The next step of the home production process was to stuff the cut balsam into pillow covers and sew them shut. Those familiar with the balsam pillow industry tell of long bouts of stuffing and sewing during the tourist season to keep up with the demand.

> I can remember sitting by the hours filling them. My father insisted that we pack 'em tight because balsam has a habit of drying very quickly. And when it does, it shrinks. And if you just put it in loosely, when it dried, you wouldn't have only a little bit down in the corner of your pillow (Butchino 1987).
>
> When I got older, I helped sew. I can remember sitting in the middle of balsam and stuffing the pillows. And mother sewed. And I thought, well, I would help her sew. And I remember staying up until 10 or 12 o'clock at night sewing (Pelletier 1988).

Some families entered the process at this stage. For example, the Kurosakas stuffed the pillows sold along with the other knickknacks and souvenirs at their store, "The Bazaar" in Lake George. Their pillow covers came from wholesale distributors like Standard Supply, and the balsam

clippings came from the Wells Christmas tree farm in Pottersville:

> Basically what he sold us was what he was pruning off the trees. To shape the trees. He must have had an enormous number of trees for the amount of balsam he used to supply us. Because we weren't the only people he used to supply. He must have supplied a good dozen people. . .It came chopped up in pieces, an inch and a half long. Clippings. And you could tell it was new because it had that nice yellowish, almost chartreuse color to it. It was new stuff and mostly the ends (Kurosaka 1987).

According to George Kurosaka, Jr., his family stuffed and sewed balsam pillows all summer to satisfy the tourists who visited the shop:

> I can remember balsam pillows being in the store from one of my first recollections. I must have been five or six. . .and I wanted to get old enough to do some of that work. And of course as a little kid you couldn't pack them tight enough, so you'd get so much in and then somebody else would do it. It was a lot of fun as a kid until you got to where you had to do it. "Because you're part of the family, and of course if you don't do it then we'll have to pay somebody else to do it." Of course. So here we are stuffing pillows. Back then they paid us some enormous wage of $12.50 a week. We were paying our regular help $15 a week. It wasn't bad. Not bad for a kid twelve years old, I guess (Kurosaka 1987).

The family and their employees used four large burlap bags of clippings, 200 pounds of balsam, in their souvenir pillows every week during the summer. Sometimes they ran out of balsam and had to call for a special order. Other times they would run out of pillow covers, and Mrs. Kurosaka would sew up some cloth and stamp it "Lake George" to make do until the next visit from the distributor.

Marketing the finished product was also a part of the process. Families who didn't own a hotel or souvenir shop advertised their pillows nonetheless. The Wells had black and white signs in front of their house. One said "Maple Syrup for Sale" and the other "Balsam Pillows" (Pelletier 1988). On Route 9 north of Schroon Lake, one of the main routes through the Adirondacks before the Northway (Route 87), homemade roadside stands held pies, cakes, honey, and balsam pillows sold to northbound tourists. An evolution of these stands is postulated by a life-long resident of North Hudson:

> First of all, somebody got the diea of selling balsam pillows. So, they put 'em on, what I call a straight chair like this. Out in the yard. Well, the wind would blow the chair over, so it wasn't very successful. So then they decided they'd get a rocking chair, like I got there. That had arms on it and it would hold the pillows, and it wouldn't blow over like the straight chair. So then somebody else got the idea of making a little—well, put a board here, and a board there and another board

> across. Put a piece of oil cloth up there and put 'em on that! So that they'd be a little more attractive. Well, they had that for quite a while. Then somebody else got the idea of building a, you might say, a rack—but a little more sturdier than what I just told you was there first—with a cover over it, so if it would rain, the pillows wouldn't get wet. No. Because if it got wet, that'd be it. It would spoil them (Nolette 1989).

The balsam pillow phenomenon is an Adirondack tradition that includes the buyers and the sellers, the tourists and the natives. The tourists, as well as the natives, have stories to share, such as that of a young girl's anticipation during car rides from Rome to Saranac to visit her invalid mother:

> My brother, by virtue of his years, sat beside Father on these trips. Alone in the back seat, I peered from the window at the woods, sniffing the pine and keeping a sharp eye out for the souvenir stores which clustered beside the road to sell deerskin gloves, bobcat-skin rugs and pine-stuffed pillows with "I Pine for You and Balsam" painted on them (Mooney 1979:11).

Another tourist criticizes:

> All the way from Keene to Elizabethtown is lovely country. There is jewelweed in the pastures, and Indian plumes as red as can be—and wild roses and oxeye daisies, and Queen Anne's lace. And there is the spicy fragrance of sweetfern—and balsam! Almost every woman who lives in the valley sells balsam pillows. They sell them with covers that say, "For you I Pine and Balsam," and I wish they would get some decent chintz, and make something different, because the balsam smells so good, it's a shame (Early 1939:156).

However, a tourist can be tagged an outsider if ignorance of the tradition is apparent. Not appreciating the difference between the fragrance of an old pillow and a fresh one would point to one's limited access to the region, as noted in the following comments by natives:

> They smell absolutely wonderful when they are fresh. I don't like them once they begin to get stale, but you'd be surprised by the people not brought up with this who still enjoy the odor that comes from a stale balsam pillow (Butchino 1987).

> I know that an awful lot of people put 'em in their car to keep their car smelling nice. I wouldn't do that because you'd dry it out. It'd smell old. So, I'd never do that myself. (Laughing) But if crazy people want to buy them I'm not going to discourage them! (Coughlin 1989).

Often balsam pillows are used for special occasions when visitors and residents socialize. A Glens Falls man who told me of his late sister who for years kept a balsam pillow given to her by a suitor sometime around 1918 (Glens Falls 1989). Balsam pillows are also used at large special occa-

sions as a symbol of the region. Helen Coughlin, a well-known balsam pillow maker from Keene Valley, made 500 wedding favors and another 1500 for a Garden Club dinner during the Olympics (Coughlin 1989).

In other situations the distinction between native and tourist/seller and buyer is blurred, as it is at the "balsam bees" of local churches. Making and selling balsam pillows as a fundraiser seems to have been a popular activity in area churches for over 100 years. As early as the 1880s church groups in Schroon Lake were working with balsam (Essex 1887). At Blue Montain Lake in the early 20th century, the United Methodist Church bazaar included balsam pillows along with the tied quilts, tatted yokes, aprons, and crocheted towel ends, made by the Ladies Aid Society. The diaries of Frances Merwin (wife of Miles Merwin, owner of the Blue Mountain House 1933) record work for these bazaars during the 'teens and early 1920s. Among the notes are entries about balsam pillows:

> September 10, 1915–"Cut balsam for small pillow for sale"
> July 15, 1917–"Cleaned out the dining room and helped put up balsam"
> August 8, 1917–"Lent out aprons for Fair and cut balsam for pillows"
> August 18, 1917–"Balsam cutting bee this P.M." (Merwin 1911-1918).

Such balsam bees were led by Frances Merwin until the hotel was sold in 1933. Her daughter-in-law, Margaret Merwin, remembers that about half of the pillow covers were bought from Standard Supply, and half were homemade by the women of the church. The latter were quilted, embroidered or decorated with some other kind of needlework, and donated. Most of the balsam pillows were sold to the local hotel guests who would stay two weeks, a month, or all summer. The pillows were souvenirs of their stay. As Mrs. Merwin says, "It was a little touch of the Adirondacks," to put on their couches, or in their bedrooms "and when they made their bed up, they would put it on the pillows, between the pillows, or just sittin' up there pretty." She recalls that hotel guests were not only the buyers, but often helped make the pillows:

> Even the guests would come out and help make the pillows. It was a kind of fun thing, and then maybe we'd have a luncheon. . .And there was a lady from New York who helped a lot. She got right into it. She liked that stuff (Merwin 1989).

Balsam bees are not a thing of the past in the Adirondacks. For sixty years Big Moose Chapel has drawn native and tourist together to make pillows to raise money for the church. Ida Winter of Big Moose has been involved in these bees since their beginning and recalls their history. The Willing Workers, a group of older ladies who sewed well, "made quilts, and comforters. They mended their husbands' woolen clothes, you know." And they sewed items for the annual fair, including balsam pillows. Ida remembers working with her mother, Gertrude Ainsworth, to make balsam pillows. "Some lady from the city would buy Indian Head material [the brand name of a type of cotton that's hard to find now], about ten yards

of red and ten yards of green. They'd meet at someone's house to cut the material so that when it was sewed on the sewing machine, you'd have three sides sewn plus a little bit on the fourth side." Then the pillow covers had to be stamped. "And this was really a labor of love because it was a long process. . .You would have two or three ladies come and help you. We used to do it over in one of our back rooms. It was a large recreation hall, and we could put them out on the table to dry." (Winter, 1987).

Using handcarved linoleum blocks, inks, a roller, and heavy piece of glass, the women would block print a cover at a time, careful to place a paper towel between the front and back so the ink would not go through. "Sometimes we had lines to hang them up. Or if we had room, we'd just lay them all out." (Winter, 1987) There were several different linoleum blocks. Mabel Shaad made one in 1947 with a picture of the Chapel. Another popular design was of a deer yard with knolls, a ravine, and a couple of deer.

Because they were selling so many, the women had to come up with a way to produce more of their popular pillows. From linoleum cuts they moved into having steel cuts made:

> There was a man who lived on Miller Street in Utica. He had an old printing press. And the women would make the pillows and then in the spring, we'd take all the pillow cases down to him, and he would do them. He charged us a nominal fee, but he gave us a very good price on it because it was for the church. But he had to do them one at a time, too. But it was easier for him to do it with a machine, than all the women doing it.

When this man retired they turned to silk screening the covers at a fabric company known by one of the church trustees (Winter, 1987).

Today local women in the Big Moose and Twitchell Lakes area prepare pillow covers (cutting the covers and sewing all but the final seam) during the winter months. Then during the summer, usually on two evenings in July, the women and girls take over the large room in the Big Moose Chapel basement, while the men and boys work in the side room with the balsam cutters. Here they put balsam limbs through the cutters to grind up the fragrant bark and needles. The balsam is then stuffed into the pillow covers, and the women finish sewing the last seam and pat the pillows into shape. They pillows are sold at the annual bazaar in August, selling out quickly each year.

Beneath the "souvenir" label, balsam pillows are part of a traditional culture intimately tied to the Adirondack region. Generations of natives and visitors are familiar with balsam pillows. Given the chance, they have stories to tell that speak of the tourist culture of the Adirondacks. Public folklorists must not presume the irrelevance of any part of the expressive culture of a region before it gets a fair hearing. To do so is a disservice to ourselves and the people we serve.

"Balsam pillows are a part of a traditional culture."

NOTES

(1) "I Pine for You and Sometimes Balsam; Adirondack Balsam Pillows and the Tourist Tradition" is the author's dissertation-in-process for a Ph.D. in American Studies from George Washington University in Washington, DC.

(2) Tourism in the Adirondack region has yet to be fully discussed in any one source. Local residents have stories to share. Particular episodes and localities are found within many regional publications, including chapters in Durant 1980, DeSormo 1980 and Hochschild 1952.

(3) See Lewis 1977:306, Moerman 1981:23-24 and Vogel 1970:124-125, 277-279.

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The Government Giveth and The Government Taketh Away: Helping or Hindering Community Traditions?

VARICK A. CHITTENDEN

The summer of 1989 in the world of the arts is now over but many of the scars remain. It has been a time for many of us to sit up and take notice, just when we had begun to feel a little secure about sources of public funding for many of our projects. First, there was the unexpected cancellation of the Mapplethorpe photographic exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, then the passing of the ominous Helms Amendment in the United States Senate. Who knows what will be next? Our elected officials my have ideals, but they are known to bend to the will of currnt political climates and to the dominant economic-social forces who get their attention. And, historically, cultural conservation, especially for such things as folk or ethnic traditions, has not been very high on most legislators' agendas.

For those of us working in public sector folklore, these recent events should be a warning. On one hand, the decade of the 1980s has been very exciting, for it has seen incredible changes in a very short time. Public sector folklore has developed from a scattering of projects funded by the National Endowment for the Arts to a growth industry. We now have successful programs throughout the nation and, in states like New York, in almost every community and segment of the population. A dedicated few became expert at gaining access to public officials and at persuading them (against great odds) to provide for folk arts programs. Thanks to their leadership, we now have a system of public funding with a very promising future. But just how reliable is that system? And how well does it meet the needs of many communities and their traditions?

For several years, many arts agencies and folklorists have concentrated their energies on developing folk arts projects that meet the funding guidelines of various state and federal agencies. Until recently, practically no systematic survey work had been done in most communities, and practically no funds had been spent on interpreting and conserving folk traditions in most communities. Moreover, practically no professional conversant with the traditional arts had been granted the "luxury" of fulltime employ-

ment to develop community-based projects. The recent work of public sector folklorists has been astounding. There have been wonderful exhibitions, concerts, media projects, publications, festivals, and much more. Many of these have been innovative, indeed model, efforts in these past few years of activity.

No one could legitimately suggest that the taxpayers whose money was spent on these projects have not gotten their money's worth! Most Americans, short of those who oppose spending public funds for any social or cultural purposes whatsoever, would support these modest expenditures on wholesome activities in local communities throughout the land. We have learned that many legislators, once made aware of the significance of folk traditions in their districts, will support public funding for tradition-based activities. Being able to point to funded projects in numerous communities and neighborhoods at re-election time has a certain appeal.

"There is much more to the lives of folk groups than artistic expressions."

There is much more to the lives of folk groups than their artistic expressions. Shared informal traditions are often essential in occupational and religious life, in coping with the physical or social environment, and in other aspects of daily life. Now it is time to be wary. The same governments, with agencies that create programs and grant funds to preserve or celebrate some community traditions, have other departments and bureaus which can and do modify or even eliminate other traditional practices and activities.

I began this paper almost ten years ago, after I observed a groundswell of protest by citizens all over New York State who felt one of their most treasured local community traditions — the covered dish supper — was in jeopardy. As an academic then new to the field of folklore, I confess that I did not think about becoming involved in their lobbying efforts. I admired what they did and I have since often thought about how effective they were. After that controversy subsided, I began to study other food traditions in my region which had been under attack. Now I ask myself, what could I have done to help and what should I try to do for threatened traditions in the future?

Government and Some Folk Traditions

The intent of social legislation in the United States, from the first housing and labor laws of the post-Civil War period to the many reforms of the present, has always been to promote the public good. In the name of protecting the poor, the unsuspecting, the disabled, or future generations, thousands of statutes and directives have been effected, especially in the decades since the New Deal and World War II. The range of regulations coming from all kinds of public agencies is too broad to list here. They have affected nearly all of us in one way or another and probably on a daily

basis. Their impact is generally difficult to measure.

In an aspect of life which for many Americans remains the most cutomary and traditional — food choices and eating habits — the impact of government regulations has been noticeable. For the large majority of people who live in urban areas far removed from the production of their food supplies, these regulations may not seem threatening. In fact, many would appear to be protective and positive. The steps between farmer, processor, packer, distributer, wholesaler, retailer, and consumer give good reason for the consumer to be careful of the food he or she purchases for the family table. That complicated, anonymous process of distribution is a far cry from the practices of the nineteenth century self-sufficient farm family who raised, harvested, preserved, and prepared most, if not all, their food at home.

Almost as radical a change has taken place for the rural, small town family who had bought local meat, dairy products, and produce from local merchants or farmers. The family and community members knew one another, knew each other's practices, and knew whom to trust (or not to trust). The numbers of rural people have diminished relative to those in large cities in states like New York. Still, today, there is a strong sense of regional, community and family identity among them, despite the trends toward centralization and standardization. Many family and community traditions have been preserved and are still practiced without much discussion or fanfare.

For these reasons, having an outside agency impose regulations on something as ordinary as the food one eats and where it is eaten is construed as an assault on the way of life of some rural New Yorkers. This regulation has not all happened at once. After the publication of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, the federal Meat Inspection Laws of 1906 were passed, requiring the inspection of meat and meat processing facilities when interstate shipping was involved. Years passed without specific regulations affecting farmer producers. Such groups as the Grange and agricultural societies, as well as rural-dominated state governments, stood in the way of bringing about such changes.

It was not until the mid-1940s that states and localities began to require inspections and not until 1962 that New York State succeeded in requiring statewide inspections of commercial slaughterhouses. Farmers who slaughtered and dressed the animals they had raised for their own consumption were exempted from licensing and inspection. They still are; they are only prohibited from selling their slaughtered animals to the public. Outspoken editors and legislators from rural districts championed the farmers' cause and made certain that this influential political and economic bloc was exempted from the more restrictive provisions of the act. Some rural New Yorkers — especially older farmers on the smallest farms — still do raise their own cattle, pigs, and poultry for food. Few slaughter anymore because of the relative convenience of taking the animals to the licensed custom slaughterer who, for a small charge, will cut up and package the

meat for the farm family's use.

More affected by the advent of regulations in New York than producers of meat on the farm have been small industries such as butter and cheese factories, maple sugar and honey producers, and sturgeon fishermen. These are only a few examples of traditional food ways affected by various agencies and regulations. By the 1960s small cheese factories, which fifty years earlier had been so common in northern New York that there was said to be one at every four corners, were given specific directives: all milk must be pasteurized, moisture and salt content must be controlled, equipment must be of stainless steel, no wood or other porous material is allowed in the processing areas, and refrigeration must be provided for aging the cheese. Gorden Moore, a traditional cheesemaker who until recently owned the last small factory in St. Lawrence County (where there were over one hundred such factories in 1900), insists that these changes have affected the quality of cheddar cheese. Raw milk makes a more robust cheese, with smoother taste and texture. The requirement to age cheese from sixty to ninety days completely under refrigeration slows the aging process and alters the taste and texture. Moore was also frustrated by a dispute he had in 1980 with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation over the release of the watery waste fluid whey into the river which runs by the factory. He argued that the whey is harmless, that the same factory had dumped whey there for over seventy years, and that his hamlet does not have and cannot afford a sewage treatment system. The department prevailed. Moore had to build a leachfield on the other side of the highway from his factory, and hire a professional engineer to design and supervise it. He says that the cost nearly caused him to go out of business, and that ongoing pressure from inspectors was a big factor in his early retirement.

Fishing for rock or lake sturgeon in the St. Lawrence River *did* come to an end with the banning of the "snatch line" or "trap line" as a means to catch these deep water fish. In the late 1960s the Department of Environmental Conservation, in protecting an endangered species, eliminated this traditional method used by that time by only ten or twelve men who fished for sturgeon for a livelihood. Until then these men (and others before them) would catch the sturgeon, process the roe or caviar and the meat and ship it overnight by train to city buyers. After the new regulations, the remaining legal means made sturgeon fishing no longer profitable (Vielhauer 1982: 20). Only the Mohawk Indians on the international St. Regis Reservation at Akwesasne still fish for sturgeon, because they are exempted from certain state fish and game laws and can use nets to fish for their own consumption.

One group of farm industries faced with changes by proposed regulations of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets in 1973 was maple syrup making and honey production. New York has consistently ranked first or second in annual production of these two products; therefore, they are a significant part of the state's agricultural economy. Both

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honey and maple sugar are among the most traditional natural sweeteners and have been part of the rural diet in the region since human settlement. Because of sweeping changes in regulations by the department, all food processors in the state — twenty-four thousand of them at least — according to food producer William Brewer, would be required to pay a twenty dollar annual license fee and conform to new sanitary standards. Hot and cold running water, a flush toilet for employees, concrete floors, and even a paved access road to the processing plant would be required. Those rules might be reasonable for sausage stuffers in Buffalo or applesauce canners in the Fruit Belt of western New York, but how about farmers in the sugar bush at least a mile and a half from the highway in the Adirondacks?

A hearing in Albany on February 1, 1973, produced some interesting exchanges between the agency's representatives and over a hundred producers gathered from throughout the state. Commissioners argued that the regulations would protect the industry from inferior or unsafe products. In 1981, Brewer recalled that "they worried about 'open cupolas' (traditional escape chambers for steam in the roof of a sugar house) allowing birds or rodents or insects in to contaminate the boiling sap." One of the commissioners concluded that "You have to remember that maple syrup is now a 'Cadillac' product. A lot of people in the cities are willing to pay the price for good maple syrup. We'd hate to have it known that somebody's syrup was contaminated," (*Watertown Daily Times* 1971). Representatives of the fifteen hundred syrup producers and the sixty-five hundred beekeepers were dismayed.

A few months later the Commissioner issued a statement: "Agriculture and Markets demands only that those maple syrup producers of 250 gallons or less annually and those honey producers of two thousand pounds or less annually do nothing more than exercise every practical precaution to meet proper sanitary standards" (*Watertown Daily Times* January 11, 1971, 10). Content with a moral victory and the implied promise of being left alone, the producers have continued making syrup and honey since without significant incident. One St. Lawrence County farmer points out that the only sugar huse he knows to have been inspected are close to the road. He never has heard of an Agriculture and Markets inspector walking over a muddy woods road back to a distant sugar house!

The Case of the Covered Dish Supper versus the Department of Health

Traditional purists or not, beekeepers, commercial fishermen, or cheesemakers may feel compelled to resist restrictions on their occupations. Another case in New York state, however, illustrates the potential impact of state regulations on a long standing food tradition in many communities. The Department of Health's well-intended regulation to ensure the serving of food under the most sanitary conditions threatened the continuation of "covered dish suppers," a community social custom in America since

"Well-intended regulation threatened the continuation of 'covered dish suppers,' a community social custom."

(at least) the first Thanksgiving dinner.

Two literary excerpts place the case in some historical perspective for New Yorkers. They are the accounts of two events several generations apart in rural upstate New York. First is from the late 1860s, a boy's account of his day at the county fair:

> They went slowly past the tall back of the grandstand, and past the low, long church building. This was not the church, but a church kitchen and dining room at the Fair Grounds. A noise of dishes and rattling pans and a chatter of women's voices came out of it. Mother and the girls were inside it somewhere.
>
> [several hours later . . .]
>
> By this time it was noon, and Almanzo had not seen his pumpkin [a prize example he had entered] but he was hungry, so they went to dinner [the noon meal].
>
> The church dining room was already crowded. Every place at the long table was taken, and Eliza Jane and Alice were hurrying with the other girls who were bringing loaded plates from the kitchen. All the delicious smells made Almanzo's mouth water.
>
> Father went into the kitchen, and so did Almanzo. It was full of women, hurriedly slicing boiled ham and roasts of beef, and carving roast chickens and dishing up vegetables. Mother opened the oven of the huge cookstove and took out roasted turkeys and ducks.
>
> Three barrels stood by the wall, and long iron pipes went into them from a caldron of boiling water on the stove. Steam puffed from every crevice of the barrels. Father pried off the cover of one barrel, and it was full of steaming protatoes, in their clean brown skins. The skins broke when the air struck them and curled back from the mealy insides.
>
> All around Almanzo were cakes and pies of every kinds, and he was so hungry he could have eaten them all. But he dared not touch even a crumb.
>
> At last he and Father got places at the long table in the dining room. Everyone was merry, talking and laughing, but Almanzo simply ate. He at ham and chicken and turkey, and dressing and cranberry jelly; and onions, and white bread and rye 'n' injun bread, and sweet pickles and jam and preserves. Then he drew a long breath, and he ate pie.
>
> When he began to eat pie, he wished he had eaten nothing else. He ate a piece of pumpkin pie and a piece of custard pie, and he ate almost a piece of vinegar pie. He tried a piece of

> mince pie, but could not finish it. He just couldn't do it. There were berry pies and cream pies and vinegar pies and raisin pies, but he could not eat any more (Wilder 1933: 260-62).

The foregoing is an episode in the early life of Almanzo Wilder as he grew up in northern New York State. Years later, he met and married Laura Ingalls in South Dakota and became the subject of her third novel *Farmer Boy*, from which this bit of fictionalized oral history comes.

A hundred years later and fifty miles to the west, Marnie Reed Crowell wrote *Greener Pastures*. In it she describes a "church supper held at noon" at the little white church in Crary Mills, right after the service, "so everyone can be back in the barn for milking come evening." She has brought two pies fresh from the oven to church; everyone else has brought contributions. After describing the service, the rush afterward to gather 33 people together around three tables downstairs, "two little ones in high chairs at the table ends," she concludes:

> When the casseroles have all made the rounds several times and we have finished our cream pies, apple pies, cherry pies, chocolate marble cake, and coffee, the men group themselves at the edge of the room, ignoring the little ones running around the tables. Laughter rings in the kitchen, where a few of the wives are washing up the dishes. Paint cans still stacked up in the corner by the kitchen door attest to the recentness of the revival of this little church (Crowell 1973: 154).

Thousands of similar events still take place weekly in communities large and small all over New York, and the United States, for that matter. All one has to do to locate them is check the calendar of upcoming activities in local newspapers or on local radio stations.

These "covered dish suppers" — otherwise known as "potluck," "touring dinners," or "dish-to-pass meals" — are a long established, frequent custom in social groups, formally or informally organized, especially in rural areas. Churches, volunteer fire departments, granges, political caucuses, senior citizens groups, and family reunions and Fourth of July picnics rely heavily on the regular or occassional gathering of participating members for social and/or business purposes. Almost inevitably, especially if people have had to travel far to the meeting, there has been the serving of food. The community dinner has long been a time for significant social interaction and communication among people who often who often live quite a distance from each other. Many groups have come to depend on these events for fund raising, to which each member can contribute in a small way. Cooks prepare dishes, often those they can do best, from favorite family recipes, and for which they have become known in their communities. They cook in their own kitchens, and have taken the dishes to town halls or church basements, which have kitchens built in for just such occasions. There they lay out an abundant and healthy choice of foods for their neighbors and friends.

Since 1957 one little noted regulation of the New York State Sanitary

Code (Part 14, Subpart 14-1), has stated that — as "temporary food establishments" — "All organizations, to include the grange, political and civic clubs, or religious organizations, may not hold functions wherein members prepare and bring food to a particular location to be shared by other members of the organization or the public at large, unless a permit is obtained from the department [of Health]." The permit could be used, after a request submitted at least 21 days before its use:

> subject to the food service establishment being constructed, maintained, and operated in compliance with this Subpart and not presenting a danger to the health of the consumer or to the public. The condition of the establishment, its equipment, utensils, personnel, mode of operation, surroundings, water supply, sewage disposal, waste handling, furnishings, food and appurtenances are also factors in determining whether its continued operation may affect public health.

While the regulation had rarely been enforced in the intervening years since 1957, an attempt in 1979 to rewrite the code brought up this provision's potential for widespread implementation. A well-meaning and energetic commissioner and his staff soon announced their intentions to put the law into effect. What followed in public action and in the legislature's reactions was remarkable. The covered-dish supper is an important social tradition especially in rural communities (although not long ago I was invited to join members of a Greek Orthodox church in Astoria, Queens, for a wonderful noon meal after Sunday services). This custom was being infringed upon by unaccustomed paperwork and intimidating inspections; its continued existence was being threatened by forces outside the community who couldn't realize its importance.

After the announced intentions of the health department were more widely known and a few permits denied until inspections could be undertaken, one state assemblyman (now congressman), David O'B. Martin of rural northern New York, fought back. He had grown up with covered-dish suppers and had attended many while campaigning for office. With the encouragement of a few other legislators from rural districts, he introduced a bill to exempt local rural groups from having to obtain permits and otherwise comply with the indicated sections of the twenty-eight page code. The response from around the state to Mr. Martin's proposed bill was immediate. His mail showed enthusiastic support for the legislation and almost unanimous opposition to, even outrage about, the regulations.

In some instances the department had already begun to process requests and follow with inspections. Reports appeared in newspapers about a Boy Scout troop cancelling its annual fund raising dinner for lack of a permit. Other organizations remained undecided about what to do. Mr. Martin and other legislators were hearing from distressed constituents who were having to stop all such meals, waiting for "plan reviews" of their facilities; plumbers and electricians were refusing to work on changes until approval was received. One church lady wrote a typical response:

The Department issued a temporary permit, while the plans were evaluated. This took about *six months* during which time the new dishwasher had to sit there. Luckily, the kitchen had the required number of sinks (four), all located the proper distance from the stove, but they were told they needed an overhead exhaust fan (priced at about $4,000). We talked our wayout of that one, the Department agreeing to allow use of the current vent.[1]

The Community Defends Its Tradition

During the several months that passed from the time the regulation was quietly being enforced by the Department of Health's inspectors with mimimal public notice, a stack of files over six inches thick accumulated in Assemblyman Martin's office.

Individuals offered their support to his efforts. A sample of responses follows:

From a woman in Mechanicville, New York:

I have not heard of anyone getting sick at a church supper and I have been going to them for 75 years and am still going strong. Church suppers are clean, wholesome food and the best food ever cooked and all cooked with great care.

A lay leader of the church in Hammondsport protested:

Can you truly imagine the task involved in preparing all the custard for an ice cream social in a single kitchen and then freezing all that same custard in that *single* area? Ice cream socials will almost surely become a thing of the past unless these groups that sponsor them are willing to risk citation for the violation of health department regulations.

A fire chief sent a letter to the editor of a local weekly:

The Owls Head-Mountain View Volunteer Fire Department in Franklin County was told by the Department of Health they had to have a permit and conform to certain regulations in order to hold their covered dish suppers. Owls Head is a very small community and, without these suppers, they could not raise the money with which to purchase the necessary equipment to run their fire department and rescue squad.

From another woman in Watervliet:

I most certainly think that there should be no such law — think of the hardship it would cause all the churches, fire houses, grange halls which put on successful covered dish suppers and which mean so much to people, not only in revenue, but in socializing.

A Presbyterian minister from Troy echoed:

Having partaken of perhaps a thousand such meals over the past fifty years, I have yet to experience illness or any negative consequence (except perhaps that of gaining a few excess

pounds of weight!), and I have no personal knowledge of anyone else having been ill because of such a meal. Also, I cannot say the same with regard to meals taken in public restaurants.

One newspaper reporter, in preparing for a tongue-in-cheek column about the "evils of the covered dish supper," interviewed several local church women for their comments:

> The town is Crary Mills, the place — the kitchen of Lena Rood, one of the Kingpins in a local ring of housewives bent on organizing monthly suppers to support their church . . . [same church referred to in *Greener Pastures*] . . .
>
> I will simply interview Lena Rood, give her enough rope, let her publicly express her opinions on the new, state regulations . . .
>
> "I think the state's gone nuts," says Mrs. Rood, "Hounding a little, off beat church, like this one, tryin' to make five cents so people can have religion."
>
> "I think it's a lot of you know what."
>
> I asked Mrs. Rood if anyone, in her memory, has ever died of a church supper in Crary Mills.
>
> "Died!" she cries out, like an insurrectionist, "Nobody died. And if anybody did get sick it was from eating too darn much."
>
> "Where else you gonna get a meal like this for under three dollars? And it's the only support our little church has got!"
>
> "If these state guys had ever went to a church supper, they'd sit down and shut up. Instead of pesterin' somethin' don't do any harm."
>
> "It's for the birds."
>
> Geraldine Ostrander (specialty — scalloped potatoes): "I am not very impressed with these new regulations."
>
> Ruth Pharoah (specialty — baked beans with home-cured bacon): "It's really annoying."
>
> "We have a little something that's family fun and supports our church and the state comes along and messes it up. What's sad is all the senior citizens that come up here to the suppers from the highrise in Canton. It's an inexpensive evening for them. They stay and play cards afterwards. What happens to them if we get all bogged down in red tape?"
>
> Cora Faroh (specialty — pies): "All of the food is prepared family style. I figure it's good enough for my family. It's good enough for other people. They all seem to enjoy it, anyways" (Pike 1979).

On the editorial pages of numerous small town and upstate city newspapers,[2] writers reflected the indignance of their communities:

In the *Cortland Standard*:

> While such a concern (public health) might be justified, we don't

see how this particular state health department ruling can accomplish anything except the elimination of a great many (perhaps the majority) of the covered dish suppers which have become a tradition in many communities and an increase in the size and cost of the health department bureaucracy (Kevin Howe, March 1, 1979,4).

A writer for the *Troy Times-Record* charged:

". . . And anyone who has been to a church supper or a fisherman's banquet or a grange hall dinner would tell you these people don't need any instructions from bureaucrats on how to cook or serve their meals.

The *Malone Evening-Telegram* added this caution:

We would also remind politicians on all levels that if these institutional type dinners are to be eliminated . . . they will be deprived of one of their greatest forums for meeting their constituents while on the political trail (April 17, 1979, 2).

One editorial elevated Mr. Martin to the title of Sir David, in a satirical mythical battle against the giant Dragon of Big Government (Richard Carlson, *The St. Lawrence Plaindealer,* May 2, 1979, 2). The correspondence among legislative committee chairmen and the transcripts of the hearings revealed much of the political infighting and vote trading which went on within both houses of the legislature. Eventually, only the hotel and restaurant owners association and eleven legislators from the city of New York vehemently supported the department.

After considerable debate in the legislature, the bill to exempt was passed overwhelmingly by both houses. Gov. Hugh Carey, supporting the decision of his appointed health commissioner, vetoed the bill. A subsequent rare attempt to override the veto failed, but not before the health department decided to "enforce" the regulation by keeping its options open.

In the next few months of 1979, the Department of Health, working with Assemblyman Martin's office, developed a policy which for all intents and purposes relieved community groups of most of the demanding expectations of the general regulations. A summary statement from the department, in the form of an interoffice memorandum dated May 30, 1979, follows:

The following actions have been taken, or are recommended to simplify the permit procedure for religious, charitable, fraternal and non-profit organizations conducting food service operations open to the public.

A pamphlet, "A Guide to Preparing Safe and Successful Covered Dish Suppers and Banquets" has been prepared and printed. All local health agencies have been sent copies of this together with "Food Poisoning." These pamphlets have also been sent to anyone inquiring about the "covered dish supper" rule and to members of the legislature who have asked for information.

All regional and area offices, district offices and local health departments have been informed of the policies regarding volunteer food operations and to avoid "equipment fixation" in dealing with them. They have been requested to offer assistance in guiding them rather than assuming a hard regulatory position. They have been advised to grant permits for a two year term to minimize necessity for applications by volunteer groups.

Part 14, Subpart 14-1, has been checked to determine what requirements may be unduly restrictive for volunteer groups that can be eliminated without risk to the consumer. There are three modifications which have been prepared for field review and adoption for the Public Health Counsel.

1. The section dealing with manual sanitation is to be changed to specifically allow a two compartment sink using the procedure in the Federal Model Retail Food Store Sanitation Ordinance. This will resolve the three compartment sink problem.
2. The permit issuing official is currently allowed to require plan review. Religious, fraternal, charitable, and non-profit organizations will be exempted from any requirement for plan review.
3. The term of a permit is variable, up to two years. A requirement at all religious, fraternal, charitable, and non-profit organizations will be exempted from any requirement for plan review.

The resolution, a kind of legislative impasse and compromise, settled the issue for the moment, but the regulation remains on the books. It was reported in area newspapers that the Department of Health Commissioner "still had 'cautionary words that long-time bakers of beans and fryers of chicken may find hard to swallow.' He added, 'these (foods) are dangerous' and that such foods are prepared by 'well-meaning people with no experience' in handling large amounts of food" (*Spotlight Magazine*, June 14, 1979).

The Need to Be Vigilant

Almost anyone will agree that there is a general need to protect people from harm or injustice. The intention of legislators and regulatory agencies has been to assure public health and safety, consumer protection from fraud, proper environmental management, and other social safeguards. But in a state like New York, and certainly for the federal government, where cultural diversity is so obvious, the writing of specific restrictions as public policy often results in hardship for some segments of the population.

While traditions may still be significant to many informal groups, they may not be well known to people outside such groups. Public agency heads in state capitols are charged with rooting out the difficulties they see in

their own areas of expertise. Since they are usually appointees of the executive branch of government and not chosen by voters, they may not have to come in contact with the general public very often. They may not be familiar with customary behaviors significant to the lives of many community groups who fall under their jurisdiction. Local legislators often seem much more responsive to the individual needs and the specific religious, community, ethnic, or occupational traditions within their districts.

"Traditions significant to many informal groups may not be as well known to people outside."

In 1983, a whole new draft proposal for the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code was circulated for public perusal and response. The thousand page document was so comprehensive and complicated that it had potential ramifications which even its authors could not foresee. While it covered all kinds of buildings and property — public and private, commercial and domestic, large and small — its implications for rural families, small communities, and other folk groups were once again threatening. Listing them all is impossible, but a few examples will give a general idea.

Number 1031.1a Building and structures to be occupied by persons shall be wired for electricity, and lighting equipment shall be installed throughout to provide adequate illumination for the intended use of each space.

How would this regulation affect hunting camps on remoke lakes or ponds? Adirondack lean-to cabins in the high peaks? homesteaders who choose to live without electricity? Amish families moving in to revitalize abandoned farms? or the scattered functional outbuildings on so many farms?

Number 1161.2a Premises which are not readily accessible from public roads and which the fire department or an emergency service may be called upon to protect in case of fire or other emergency, shall be provided with access roads or fire lanes so that all buildings on the premises are accessible to the fire department and emergency service apparatus.

Number 1161.2b Access roads and fire lanes shall be adequately maintained and kept free of obstructions at all times.

How will the maple syrup producers respond to these rules?

Number 900.2p *Public or Employee Dining Places:* Where food or drink is served, and the dishes, glasses, or cutlery for such services are to be reused, there shall be at least one machine or 3-compartment sinks of suitable type for effective washing and sanitizing of such articles before reuse. Cold water need not be available.

Number 9000.2q *Kitchen Serving Public or Employee Dining Places:* Every kitchen serving the public or employee dining places

> shall have installed therein at least one lavatory for the personal use of kitchen employees.

Shown this section, one local official in a northern New York community, threw up his hands in dismay: "How about covered dish suppers? Here we go again!"

For nearly a year there were discussions and hearings across the state and the public was given many opportunities to express their views. This time our county planning office asked me to write a letter to the appropriate officials in Albany, detailing some of the kinds of folk traditions which were in jeopardy should the draft proposals be approved as written. Ultimately because of the testimony of specialists including myself, and because of general public concern, numerous changes were made. A revised code went into effect on January 1, 1984. An interesting twist this time was the state's decision to allow local municipalities either to enforce the state code or to write and enforce local laws on fire prevention and building codes which would incorporate local standards. At last in possession of more than a moral victory, local legislators and communities now have only to watch out for changing administrations with new ideas and no sense of history, or the fickle whims of the political climate.

What Can We Do?

At the risk of seeming to suggest that academic folklorists abandon their research and publishing or that public sector folklorists divert their attention entirely from their traditional arts projects, I would like folklore specialists to consider other contributions to their field. I see a need for more activities to be devoted to political action in defense of community traditions. Many folklorists are now settling in communities, either as tenured faculty or as staff folklorists with local agencies, and are getting to know a great deal about local traditional ways. As folklorists and as good citizens, it may be our obligation to come to the aid of endangered traditions when we know about them.

In the years since the happy resolution of the covered dish supper controversy, I have written or spoken to legislators or agency representatives about a number of local issues where my expertise might be useful. In one case an artist who has created sculpture in her yard and garden for nearly thirty years[3] has asked me to help her when the state's Department of Transportation was going to widen the highway in front of her house. The construction would possibly destroy many of her sculptured figures arranged by the artist along with 150 feet of drainage ditch. Fortunately, my visit to the department's regional office was successful. Sympathetic engineers agreed not only to help her remove each of the figures but to put them back anywhere she wanted them when they were finished with their work. I doubt if they would have done so without someone's speaking up on her behalf.

And recently the local planning office and a citizens' group, which are opposing plans of the United States Air Force to begin daily low flying

military aircraft maneuvers on a "race track" over the Adirondacks and the St. Lawrence River Valley, have asked me to help. During the coming year of trial runs, I will be documenting local folkways that are at all affected by these flights. I anticipate that dairy farmers, hunters, tourists, and Amish families, to name a few groups, will find plenty to complain about — noise, danger, and nuisance, for example — within the year. I expect to be asked to testify as an expert witness at public hearings to review the flights' effects and to make recommendations regarding their continuation.

Folklorists can be as helpful in the preparation of environmental impact statements and in economic development planning. Their colleagues in other disciplines have already done so, either as paid consultants or as volunteers. If chemists or geologists are consulted about solid waste disposal; if biologists testify about endangered wetlands; if archaeologists speak out about historic preservation; if sociologists are asked to comment on the construction of prisons in certain populated areas; why can't folklorists help fight the many threats to fragile human traditions over which governing bodies have responsibility or control? American society may not have reached the point where it needs officially appointed ombudsmen for folk traditions, but as individuals folklorists can still be effective mediators or spokespersons when communities don't know how or fear to speak out. And, while there may be no easy way to become trained in "folk culture law" (that would be a fascinating specialty), folklorists all know how to research community practices and customs and the impact of change upon them.

"Folklorists can be mediators or spokespersons when communities don't know how or fear to speak out."

The field of public sector folklore has developed with considerable help of funds granted by friendly government agencies who sincerely want to affirm and preserve the traditional arts of diverse cultural communities throughout the nation. This role of advocacy is admirable and has produced great results in a few years time. But what happens in periods of tight budgets or when government censorship is condoned? Long term preservation of folk traditions and empowerment of folk groups to continue and flourish may be helped even more by making it possible for them to speak for themselves, to resist thoughtless instrusions on their good traditions, and to protect their freedom to carry on their rich folk heritage.

NOTES

This article is an expansion and a revision of a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society in Pittsburgh, on October 16, 1960. It was then titled "The Covered Dish Supper vs. New York Public Health Law, State Sanitary Code, Sub-part 14-1.191."

I wish to acknowledge the great help given to me in this research by Congressman David O'B. Martin of Canton, New York, and his staff who turned over their complete files on this and related subjects.

1. The names of letter writers will remain anonymous because of the confidential nature of Mr. Martin's private files.
2. Clippings of many newspaper and newsletter articles were collected in the assemblymen's files, many without any specific documentation of their source. I have included that information in the text when available.
3. My article on the life and work of Veronica Terrillion appears in *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments*, edited by Daniel Franklin Ward, presented in 1984 by Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

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A Discussion: Community Cultural Empowerment

DANIEL FRANKLIN WARD, *editor*

The New York State Folk Arts Roundtable is a forum for the discussion of current issues and future directions in public folk arts programming in New York State. The Roundtable is co-sponsored and co-produced annually by the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts and the Cultural Resources Council of Syracuse and Onondaga County. At the 1989 Roundtable, over forty public folklorists working on local, county and regional projects, reported on their current documentation and programming efforts, each giving special emphasis to the issues raised by their work in communities that related to the Roundtable's theme of "Community Cultural Empowerment."

Martin Koenig of the Ethnic Folk Arts Center in New York City served as moderator for a panel of five folklorists who examined "Community Cultural Empowerment" in greater depth. Charlotte Heth of the American Indian Program at Cornell University distinguished the roles of insiders and outsiders in cultural documentation and described her own role in the creation of a manual to guide Native Americans in the documentation of their own traditions for themselves. Edgar Betelu, who emigrated from Argentina while in his teens, described his experiences collecting Latino traditions in New York City. He spoke of how the cultural identities of Latinos are redefined in an American ethnic context and he raised an important related question: who decides who's going to be empowered? The third panelist to speak was Vaughn Ward, staff folklorist at the Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council. She claimed to be an outsider and she focused her discussion on her experiences as a recruiter and trainer of community insiders who now do fieldwork in their own communities. Varick Chittenden, professor of English at SUNY College of Technology in Canton, described his experiences as an insider: at once a "culturally deprived" native, a teacher and a folklife researcher working in the area where he grew up. The final speaker, Sharon King, Director of Regional Arts Development for the Southern Arts Federation in Atlanta, spoke of the politics of culture. She reminded the folklorists present at the session that traditions belong to the communities within which the folklorist is often only a guest. Community members, she concluded, should never be

thought of merely as resources or informants: they should be our partners and instructors — and the directors of their own cultural projects. They should be enabled to show us how to look at what we're trying to see.

The following is a transcription of the presentations made at the panel on "Community Cultural Empowerment" held at the 1989 New York State Folk Arts Roundtable in Syracuse. The program was recorded and transcribed by independent radio producer, Miriam Graham.

Martin Koenig

You know, empowerment is something that has long been a goal and long been a theme for political activists, but whether it's a priority for folk arts workers I'm not quite sure. I took a dictionary and looked at what the term "empowerment" meant, and the definition of empowerment is "to give power or authority to, to authorize, to enable or to permit," and I was struck by that whole thought of giving permission, to authorize. And I don't think that's the intent of what we're talking about in terms of empowerment, I think we're talking about something quite different from that. And just one other thing to put in as a mischievous statement is, in terms of the panel here, it did strike me as being interesting that there was no empowered people on the panel, and that's something I think we should deal with and look at also, as to why that's so, just to look at it. So, the first speaker is Charlotte Heth. She's director of the American Indian Program at Cornell University; she's a professor in the music department at Cornell and a member of the Cherokee National of Oklahoma. Most of her work has been in audio/video production with Indian musicians. And she will be speaking on letting people speak for themselves, the insider-outsider issue, and empowerment through credentiality.

Charlotte Heth

I want to talk about several different things, and, first of all pose a number of what may turn out to be silly questions, but a lot of these questions came to me in preparing to write this paper, and along with it came very few answers. And I know they're some of the questions that all of you deal with all the time. In my case, I frame almost everything in terms of music and dance, at least in the beginning, and then I sort of spin out into other areas after that, so you'll have to forgive me if that's my particular bias. I have several other biases but that's the main one. In particular, several important questions must now be asked about community-based music and musicians. Does success and recognition in the mainstream of American music define success and recognition in home communities? Is it necessary to be poor to be traditional? Are older musical forms, performance practices, instrumentation, and text settings considered better? Is the traditional performer a good role model for younger musicians? In the case of musicians, a lot of times, you know, they play at night, they hang out in bars, and parents don't necessarily want their children to associate

with people like this. Are there appropriate ways for young people to learn and perform traditional music? Should outsiders be encouraged to learn and perform the music? Is the use of a native language or dialect required of a musician? Are community-based aesthetics of music different from those of mainstream America? Have the occasions for performance of music changed? And how valuable is music to the community? As I said, there are not any easy answers to these questions and they're questions that a lot of us think about all the time anyway.

In my role before I came to New York, I was director of the American Indian Studies Center at UCLA, which is a research center. And for those of you who've worked in an academic setting, you know that research can be defined in a number of ways. In our case, we chose to define it on the side of applied research rather than "pure" research, which might have gotten us more points with the administration or the other faculty, but we had an advocacy role and we kept the advocacy role at least as long as I was there. Concurrent with that was the passage of the Indian Self-Determination Act by Congress. So at that time, various federal agencies had a mandate to allow Indian people, or permit them, as Marty was saying, to determine their own future, which could be anything from schooling to medical clinics, health clinics, and so on, to the arts. What we chose to do as part of this self-determination was to start a project, actually funded by the Administration for Native Americans, which would produce a book that we hoped would help people get through various lean times in the government. The book ended up being called *Community-Based Research*. And it's for Native Americans, so it's Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, and so forth. In the book we went through a lot of the things that you all have to go through in planning a project: getting your resources together, evaluating it, applying for grants, getting your little advisory council together, whatever you need. We went through all of that and how to get with the communities, bring them in and launch a project, evaluate it and start over again. One of the chapters that I sort of insisted on was a chapter which is called "Cultural Arts" and, even though I didn't write this chapter, I was the informant for this chapter. So we went through the following topics: organizing people, methods, collecting data, including tape recordings, photography, video and cultural documentation, identifying cultural context, working with one's own culture, which is something we are talking about today, continuing support for the arts, living arts, the instance being that arts a lot of times have been gallery art and that sort of thing rather than living arts. And we gave this away, five hundred copies to Indian communities all over the country and we had some left for sale. I don't know how many are left now, but that was written into our grant that we do the work, we produce the book, and we give it away. One thing that we covered in here was how to use your consultant. And there's something I think particularly important to people getting NYSCA grants, because NYSCA requires a consultant many times for community organizations. And that in a way gives them permission to ask for the money, if you have

a consultant lined up. So we have a chapter in here on how to use your consultant. In my own role sometimes as a consultant, I find that if I show up to do whatever it is for somebody's project, not just in New York but in other places, they expect me to immediately take over the project and tell them what to do. But that's not what a consultant does. People ought to know that, so we covered that a little bit here, about how to get ready to use your consultant and how to use them once they're there and how to follow up with them, and so forth.

Another project we did in letting artists speak for themselves was we produced an arts conference which we called "Sharing a Heritage." As you can see this is a book, there was a poster, there was a three-day conference. We had folk artists performing, we had folk artists on the podium with the academic speakers side by side talking about their own research they were doing in their own communities. Most of the time these old-timers are doing all the research and all you have to do is find the right one. They know everybody else, they know where all the stuff is in the archives. They don't know how to get it necessarily but, you know, there are people who are encyclopedias even of information beyond themselves. We invited a lot of those people to come and to speak side by side with the scholars, and we published the book. You'll see in the middle of the book, there is a section devoted to traditional artists. They're the only ones who got their pictures in the book. This is a way of getting them to feel better about themselves, to feel equal to the scholars, the people they would normally hire as consultants on projects and so on. And the book is a lasting memory.

Another thing that I did was we had this journal at UCLA called *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, which is now in about its twelfth volume, this is volume six and I did a whole issue on American Indian music, and I wrote an essay on insiders and outsiders, because a lot of people believe if you're an insider, if you're a certain color or an ethnic group, you're going to have a much easier time in the community than someone who's not. That's not always true, because there are factions in communities, there's Christian and there's non-Christian for Indian groups in many cases. There are clans, inter-tribal differences, all sorts of things that impact on whether or not you're going to be successful. And age and sex of course are very important. I take the other side of the argument, too, and talk about white studies, because a lot of the emphasis on ethnic people doing work on their own communities says they won't be objective. And, you know, if we're all studying western history and philosophy in school, isn't that white studies? And aren't most of the people studying it white people? So how could they possibly be objective writing. It would be like saying we have to have a Russian to write American history, something of that nature.

O.K. The *piece de resistance* is this book, which is another project of our center, it's called *Preserving Traditional Arts*. This is called a tool kit for Native Americans. Susan Dow was our project director and happens to be a professional photographer. She did everything. She did the layout. She did

all of the photographs and so forth. We were talking in the "Artists in the Schools" this morning about something that's "turn-key." This is almost "turn-key," because you can take a chapter here, for example on still photography, and you can teach people in the community how to do that still photography, photograph their own objects in museums or wherever. There's a chapter on tape recording, on video recording, on archiving, on how to take care of your baskets, you know, the works. And this is the same kind of project, we got the money and we gave away the book. And it was so successful, we got some more money and we gave it away again. It was an NEA sponsored project. The first run I think was a thousand, we gave away five hundred; second run was maybe fifteen hundred and we gave away seven hundred fifty. So it's a book that is out there now in at least Native communities, and is available for sale I think from UCLA for other people. Part of the empowerment idea was that every picture in this book is of an Indian person documenting another Indian person. It is not a picture of some outside person doing it, and there are pages and pages telling people that they're the best people to document their own arts, they know it the best, and so forth. There's one other thing I wanted to mention but I think Betty Belanus will cover it, so I'll just stop there.

Martin Koenig

The next speaker is going to be Edgar Betelu. He's the Folk Arts Coordinator for Ollantay Center for the Arts in Jackson Heights, Queens, in New York City. He emigrated while in his teens from Argentina in 1980. His family emigrated for the same reason as other emigrants, both economic and political reasons. He's been very active in Latin American area studies and got his Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. He is part of the Latin American community in New York City and its different activities, both cultural and political. I should say that Ollantay Cultural Center is a Latin American cultural center, and he is another insider working in his community.

Edgar Betelu

I was hoping I would be the last one to speak, so I could get a better idea of what we are discussing. What I'll be talking about very briefly, I think, is a subject that is very important, because it touches on issues such as what I understand to be cultural equality, economic equality, and so on. I'll try to give you an idea of my own experience which is perhaps a bottom-up experience — I consider myself to be part of the community — and then I'll touch on the issues. When I was reading the brochure that Dan sent me, and the question was to develop the idea of "inside" and "outside," the first thing I thought about was, "well, 'inside' and 'outside' to what?" I migrated from Argentina in 1980 to New York, mainly for economic reasons, that is my parents, I was still pretty young. And I always defined myself as a middle class Argentinian, son of pretty well educated parents. Well, that pretty much has changed, and quite drastically, since

my arrival to New York and to the United States because I've come to realize that I'm no longer an Argentinian but a Hispanic. I'm not necessarily the person defining that but I'm being defined as Hispanic. Actually no one knocked on my door and asked me, "Listen, Edgar, where do you come from?" No, they have me fill out applications in which I would put, they're very awkward, you're either white Hispanic, black Hispanic, Puerto Rican, other. I'm always very confused. In any case, I'm the "other." I get asked where I come from, what kind of a name I have. And I think there is a mainstream. There is a mainstream, because nobody tells me I'm an Anglo-American. You know, there is no such thing as an Anglo American. And what makes me no longer an Argentinian but a Hispanic is also the issue that I come here and I encounter other Latinos from Latin America, who migrated also for economic reasons, who speak my own language, but who have a very different background than my own. So, it's very enriching and I enjoy that very much. However, I think that sometimes there are stereotypes or prejudices formed around what to be a Latino is. I understand what I do to be very tied to the question of cultural diversity, and, in a way, to enhance understanding and appreciation of diversity of different cultures, both within the Latin community, because, I tell you there are things that I attach value to that maybe another Latino does not. Within the Latino community, and also outside the Latino community to the mainstream.

Again, so what is the community and why am I a community person? Well again, maybe the fact that I am an immigrant, I have felt and I do feel sometimes prejudice, to be prejudiced against, a certain nostalgia for something left behind that is always idealized, and I think that's shared by most immigrants.

I wanted to stress the issue of language. Right now I'm speaking in a language that is not my own. Sometimes that's hard to grasp, but I do feel it intensely. It's interesting, the word "empowerment," what does that mean? Who defines who is to be empowered, and why does someone have power to say who is to be empowered and who is not? I think that's another question that borders more on political, strategic action, that does not relate directly to the issue of cultural equality. I mean, one thing is to be dealing with a political issue, in which there is a certain type of rationale involved. When we deal with a cultural issue — of course, both things are very tied together. What I'm trying to say is that we should think about: do communities want to be empowered? What do they understand by "being empowered?" If I approach a Latin American in Jackson Heights and ask him what is "community empowerment," he'll probably have no idea of what I'm talking about. And again, who draws the line? Who decides who's going to be empowered and why? I think that's an issue to be touched upon: language. The fact that I consider myself to be doing a good job within my community is because I speak the language of most Latin Americans. That is Spanish. I don't want to fall into a language reductionism of any sort, because I think that's not the issue. The issue is a certain sensitivity

and an understanding of the object of study. It's not Spanish that makes me a Latino. I can speak English and still be a Latino, as many New Yorkans would certainly certify. I really would like my input to be more an answer and question session, than what I can think of discussing right now, so I would like to go on to another panelist for their contribution.

Martin Koenig

The third speaker will be Vaughn Ward. Vaughn is the staff folklorist at LARAC, Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council. She has had a long time commitment to collecting, preserving, and performing traditional music of Upstate New York. She's a former teacher of English, folklore, and humanities, and has a background in business. She is not an insider, but will speak about recruiting and training insiders from the community to do fieldwork to work in those communities.

Vaughn Ward

Although I'm not an insider I have lived in the area twenty-five years and know a lot of people, but I'm an outsider in several different ways. In the first place I'm not a native of the Northeast, I'm a native New Mexican. Yes, there are Anglo-Americans, and I am one, except for the part of me that's cousin to Charlotte here. I have a very different cultural background from the one in which I've spent my adult life, and I think that's given me immediately an outsider approach to living in the area.

I think that empowerment is a two way street. I'm very uncomfortable indeed, as I think consensus is building, thinking that I might confer power on people who've been getting along just fine without me for generations. I think that I'm more comfortable thinking about the way I work with people to think that we fulfill a mutual need, and that we serve each other. I think I have, I hope, certain things to give to them in their community and they have certain things without which, things that they do and information that they have without which I couldn't do my work, and I couldn't do for them what I want to do, or help them to do for themselves what I think would be nice. I think when you work within a community that carries the traditions, that we have a very different role than we're prepared for in our professional training. Particularly if we live in the neighborhood or reasonably in the neighborhood, it's an odd combination of a facilitator, and a teacher, and a gatekeeper, and a contextualizer. And always somehow while doing all this we need to keep a back seat to the tradition that we're putting up front, and remember that we are, after all, a guest in this community. It's tricky and it takes a long time, or at least it takes me a long time. By a long time I don't mean six weeks, I mean maybe six years of pecking away at something.

In my introductory to the little booklet on the back table called *The Beauty of the People*, I describe what community fieldwork brought to a project that I've been directing in Washington County. Now I want to talk about

how that came to be and why I use community fieldworkers. I don't think that everybody needs to use community fieldworkers. I don't think it's the right thing for everybody. It seems to be the way I need to work. I have a large area of service with many communities that are long-established communities where newcomers are people who've only been there for four generations.

Community fieldworkers are essential for contacts, introductions, for practical arrangements, and for training me about their community. I use them because first of all the practical components of my situation require some solution like this. Secondly, because I have the skills to use this approach. And thirdly, I personally am willing to trade a degree of control for support and context. I think if you're not willing to make that trade it's not for you. We all have our own working style. It takes a while to understand that style, because in public sector folklore so much of the time we're working in isolation in a client relationship with people.

That's very important, I think, to identify one's own style and objectify it and accept it, and I have to figure out how I can work within my own style to meet my own needs so that I can work. And one of the things I need is a supportive group and a context. And I need that more than I need total control. Other people don't feel that way. I think that if you don't feel that way, this approach isn't for you. Then we're talking about a situation which requires delegating responsibility in order to meet goals, a project director who has the skills to train and supervise the people — I have not just folklore background but I have both business and education — and a project director whose nature allows an approach which means giving up control.

So, do I need help? Do I know how to get it this way? And am I comfortable working this way? So here's what I do, because the answer to all those questions to me is yes. The first step is recruitment, and that's tricky. I don't have any easy answers. I'll just tell you what I've done and try to tell you how it works for one person. First of all, the recruitment has to be soft sell. They don't necessarily need what I have to sell, particularly if I come in waving any kind of governmental or outsider banner. I do find that one can use the fact that a grant has been given as a vote of confidence, that the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, or some Foundation thinks that your community is so wonderful that they've given us this money, and your community has been chosen to do this project. Then, at that point you really have to go to the community, I think, with hat in hand seeking advice. I start by circulating letters to all the obvious people, the town historians, the town supervisors, the mayor, the county historians, clergy, fraternal organizations. And then I get on the telephone and I start making appointments. I call them up and "did you get my letter" and "yes, I did, and you want to talk to so and so." And I make a follow up appointment and if they say "I don't want to have anything to do with the government," and they hang up then I realize that that's the way you make choices. In this call, I don't say, "Look,

I'm looking for people to do community fieldwork and whitewash my fence." I explain the project and ask if I can come and see them and ask them if they can help me think about the best way to go about this project. What I'm asking for at this point is just advice and contacts. When I go for my visits, I take something to show people, a little slide show, a booklet, a short video, something that will make very concrete, and not verbally, what it is the kind of thing I'm looking for. Something they can identify with. And then I informally interview this contact person, and try to reinforce the traditional elements in their own personal story, whatever they are. If it seems to be a fruitful meeting, then I ask them to call a meeting of the people who might help with the project.

You're beginning to see this takes a lot of time, because I have to do this with a lot of people before I even get to the stage that there's a preliminary meeting. Then I have a series of local meetings in which I let people know who I am, and what I do. And I meet everybody, and I show them again something they'll understand, maybe the same thing I've shown the contact person. Let them know exactly what I'm looking for and listen to them, take some social time, make appointments, meet people at home. And then I give them, the ones who are going to be meeting with me, one thing to read, not a book but a handout of some kind that I've written, a couple of pages. What I've learned to do — and I've learned it the hard way — is to study the style that local people communicate with each other, the written style. I look at their newsletters, their club newsletters, and the columns in the local papers. I visit people at home, and at that time I interview every single person who's going to be a community fieldworker. And we play back the tape and we summarize the tape and we discuss what they've said, and from that we make a finding list of the topics that might be discovered in their community and a list of people they might interview.

At this point I give them Sandy Ives' book to read, and ask them to make an appointment for us to do a team interview. And then I go and I repeat this process. I get back to this person, they've read Ives, we go and do the interview together, we evaluate it, I show them things like biodata sheets, and give them a book which I like very much, by Carl Oblinger, called *Interviewing the People of Pennsylvania*. It has some nice questions, it talks about different kinds of communities, and gives us a start for a theoretical base for looking at communities which is in no way complicated or esoteric, it's just very good reading and very clear. Then I call together, after I've done this with all of my people, and they conduct an interview on their own. About six weeks from the first meeting, we have a second group meeting. It's like a class at this point, people have selected themselves out as well as in. They talk about their interviewing, everybody's asked to have a spot, two minutes of a tape. We discuss their interviewing techniques, do a clinic on that. And we make a plan to continue this project. At this point I develop a newsletter which summarizes all the meetings, and send this around to all the people. Then there's a second round of

interviews in which we plan for whatever local event the community fieldworker will host, because always in these initial stages, I set the community fieldworker up to host something locally which will be high profile and a guaranteed success for the fieldworker. And my name is never in the paper, the fieldworker's picture is in the paper. Sometimes the local people don't even understand why I'm there, it's Priscilla's event. This continues throughout the project period. If they go on beyond that, then I reach the point that we're talking about standards of the field, and they have increasing responsibility.

I can't leave this without warning you that, of course, there are pitfalls. I need to work this way, but in any choice there are pitfalls. This is not the career of these people. I try whenever I can to pay them, it's the accepted method of appreciation and also a little bit binding. But the best workers are people who are vey balanced, and they're not going to sacrifice their personal life. So you have to balance what you ask of them, so your most competent people won't burn out and decide this isn't what they want to do with their spare time. I have learned, and I will pass this on to you, that there is a red flag in ocmmunity fieldworkers who approach me with a great deal of intensity and over-investment, and this sense that I've learned that these people have their own agenda, and I think we have to be careful. Without meaning to, sometimes these people who don't fit into their own communities will find an outsider and use that outsider to validate them to their communities. We have to be very careful about not being used in that way, it will destroy our work with that community faster than anything. And you'll get into a power struggle with that fieldworker. It's tempting to take someone on without going through this lengthy process. I've found that that's a mistake which costs me time in the long run. It's important to take the time to get to know the person. Any good manager asks people for what they can give, and works around what they can't give. You have to remember that once you relinquish control, it's gone. You have to watch out for the sorcerer's apprentice syndrome, and be sure that you set limits when you work more into a management position. With responsibility and recognition, people buy in, they have ownership. This gives you support, it gives you a broad base for your operations, it gives you a litmus test for whether you're doing it appropriately or not. And with this, I found I have to grow up, I have to learn how to set limits for adults, and I have to remember that no matter what, no matter how much these people have done for me, and how much I love working this way, that the bottom line is "I'm the mommy, that's why." And that when they question, there comes a point when I have to say, "I'm the mommy, that's why." I'm in charge. The buck stops here. For me, it works, as long as I remember that, as long as I remember the limitations, and as long as I'm careful to bring in consultants, other colleagues in the field, and expose my workers to those other colleagues.

Martin Koenig

The next speaker is Varick Chittenden. Chit is professor of English at SUNY College of Technology in Canton, New York. He has developed an organization, Traditional Arts in Upstate New York, that's involved with researching and presenting folk cultures of the region. He grew up in the area where he teaches and does his fieldwork. He's a native working with his own regional culture. He's an insider, with all its positive and negative aspects. He added on my card, he is a folklorist, an insider, and an outsider at the same time.

Varick Chittenden

I thought that I would start this afternoon by sharing with you a little bit of a more personal way of looking at this, because I'm sure we're going to get over the course of the afternoon a great deal of the discussion from the professional perspective. But, because I go about my work a little differently from the way some of you do, that is to say, the reasons perhaps that I do it and my opportunities for doing it, I thought I would try to give you my perspective, at least to see if it would provide anything of use to the discussion.

Because I am, as Marty said, a native of the region, of the farthest northern part of the state, and because actually even by Vaughn's definition I'm a native because my family moved into the area, on both sides, my mother's side in the early nineteenth century, about 1820, and I grew up in the same community where my great great grandfather helped to establish the boundaries in the early nineteenth century, I have always had a firm sense of identity with that place and with those people. And because of that it took me a long time to discover that in fact there was any folklore in the region in which I grew up. I lived in a big old Victorian house that was shared with my grandmother.

My grandmother was quite elderly, even when I was small. She was a wonderful storyteller and sort of the family chronicler, who wrote letters and kept diaries and absolutely fascinated me with all of her interest on local history. When I would get the opportunity I would go to my family general store which was next door, had been there since the 1820s, and in that little store of course all kinds of wonderful storytelling, and during the evening games of skill among the men who would come in, all sorts of things that sometimes my mother and grandmother would not want me to go to listen to. But I had that real sense of this place, this sort of landmark on the corner, where everybody went at least once or twice a week, maybe even once or twice a day, and where I was able to help out in my small way as a child. And then I managed to get away to school. Twenty-five miles away, to college, a small liberal arts college where I felt that I fit in sort of in my own way. I discovered along the way a professor, who was an older man, who I learned along the way had actually had a record of taking North Country kids under his wing, and encouraging them

along. And while I didn't go to him for that precisely, I became a student of his several times over. We became very close friends, he was extremely interested in local history and antiques, and I think he as much as anybody got me started in this whole business. And then I started high school teaching, which is a great way of dealing with the community, learning about the community, even though you don't set out to in a specific way.

I became involved in the local historical society at a very young age. Most people associate people interested in historical societies as being well beyond middle age, and I was just out of college and was active in that. Because of that, after I reached about the age of twenty-eight, I became interested in looking into the program that is, sadly to say, now since defunct, in Cooperstown. At Cooperstown, I studied for a year, and I met Bruce Buckley, and Rod Roberts, and Lou Jones, and I learned, finally, after all those years that these things I'd been interested in had a name, it was called folklore. As I was away from home for a while and had this chance to reflect — as sometimes you all have a chance to do — I began to think, "What could I do with these things I had learned once I got back home?" I had been on a leave of absence and was expected to be back teaching. So I went back and began to think about, one, how I could use it with students, and also how I could expand that work into the community. I managed shortly thereafter to develop some survey work in the community, and I started to develop a course for my students.

I am at a two year college, a two year college which serves mostly the counties north of Syracuse. I think sixty to seventy percent of our students come from this region north of Syracuse. And I learned very early on this is a good place to do work with folklore, in a two year college, because students come there from their families and then go home. And then it began to occur in the late 1970s the whole idea much more of, then I guess we called it applied folklore, now I guess we call it public sector folklore. I began to think, you know as a teacher in a public two year college, I am a public sector folklorist already. I don't have to do exhibitions or catalogs or radio shows or all those kinds of things. I am really a public sector folklorist. You may challenge that idea, but I think that in fact I am in that capacity. But I also began to think about my role in the community as a person doing fieldwork myself, and I really tried to give some thought to what my own goals were for myself, as well as my goals for the communities in which I would work. Because perhaps I have the advantage of not having to rely on the study of folklore for a career, that is to day, for my income, my livelihood, I can be some of you might call it a bit more dillettante-ish, I call it a bit more choosey, selective, about the things that I can become involved in. Now this is perhaps an unfair statement, or actually inaccurate, I'm not sure, but that's the way I happen to see it. I don't have the time to work with it full-time, but I do become involved in projects in the community. And when I go out into the community I've begun to think about how I am perceived. One, I'm a native. I can always mention a street name, or a town name, or a family name, or somebody because

that little business was on that corner for so many years where people traveled by, people recognize the family name. In fact, it's one that probably once you've heard it, probably you'll never remember it again, or you remember it for a long time, it's an unusual name. I have that kind of advantge, being able to talk to them about certain kinds of things. But I also have I think certain kinds of concerns as an insider, because my wife tells me I'm about as atypical of a North Country person as anybody she's ever met. I'm not a hunter, or a fisherman. I am not into a lot of the kinds of activities that typically North Country people are. I think I early on became a student of the culture that was around me, and became fascinated by it, and became interested in being someone else's Boswell, I guess. In being able to follow those things and understand them, and became a bit more of a missionary of helping other people, to work with them.

So I guess the role of the teacher, both in and out of the classroom, in the gallery, over the airwaves, through the exhibition catalog, in putting together festivals, doesn't stop. In fact, I think all of us as public sector folklorists have that kind of teacher's role in the community. My own goals for myself were first of all to go back, as I raised the question with myself in Cooperstown, to find out is there some of that folklore stuff up north, where I used to be. And in fact, of course we all know, it's everywhere and we just began to figure out where it was and what it was. And then I soon began to want to, for my own students, for those people I developed some other kinds of projects for, develop a sense of their own awareness. This may sound a bit patronizing, I think I should say that I am part of that group of the folk that I wanted to be more aware, it's self-serving — but I wanted to share that. An awareness, then an understanding, an appreciation. Along the way, I also have found, as you have, that there are some other things that happen: some opportunities for the people with whom we work to gain in other ways. You may call this empowerment, you may call it other things. But certainly we've had the experience where somebody's own livelihood, the marketing of their goods, the marketing of their performances can become an issue. Now whether or not that is the desired result, or whether it's something that actually comes along as a result of our work, it's a dilemma, I think, that some of us get into in some ways. But it happens, to turn out now to be, in some instances, one of my goals for people in the community.

I think to me, though, the most exciting and the most interesting, being a native and going back now to being an insider, is that the study of, the learning about, the observation of, that is to say, the informed observation of activity in whatever way that we do it, in festivals, in other ways, the excitement that I find is that we really provide a sense of confirmation and affirmation for these kinds of customs and activities, and practices that we find in the community.

I guess I should add one last thing that I may have said earlier. There probably is some accuracy in looking at rural people, working with rural people, at least in my part of the woods, that we are, despite the way I

come across, kind of self-effacing, we're often quite independent, and we're independent especially when the rules come down, when somebody wants to interfere with our ways of life. We're often satisfied, or at least satisfied with what we have, and we let the rest go by. And I think, finally, we probably very much react, frequently react against modern urban life, taking a great deal of satisfaction in that which we have, even though outsiders may look at this as being poverty. I used to really enjoy the term in the early 60s, when I was first teaching, I got into a school that was described as "culturally deprived." So we got all kinds of extra financial aid and federal grants and so forth. We were culturally deprived. So I present to you a culturally deprived folklorist. Thank you.

Martin Koenig

Our last speaker is Sharon King who's traveled far to be with us today. She's director of regional arts development for the Southern Arts Federation. She's been working on bringing community-based organizations together with local institutions in producing community celebrations. She's been working towards rural revitalization by helping to bring needed skills to rural arts groups. She's worked in performing arts with non-traditional forms by bringing the necessary consultants and theater specialists, to get minority performing arts groups on the road touring. She has worked with the North Carolina Arts Council creating and touring the Black Heritage Tour in North Carolina, and at present is concerned with arts and culture and the aging process. I asked if I could summarize it, and she said, "Oh yeah, it's fine," and the summary I put down was: she's a community organizer, she's involved in cultural self-determination, she's involved in the politics of culture, determining how black culture is to be presented. She mobilized the participation of local communities for the North Carolina Heritage Tour, in organizing different communities, and she can speak on where to and how to intervene in this work.

Sharon King

To give an idea of where I'm coming from: I have a degree in folklore from Chapel Hill and have worked as a folklorist, but I'm also a public school educator, or have been at one time or another; I'm also an arts administrator, a community activist, and the like. So I'm not a full-time practicing professional in the field of folklore solely. And of course my position at the Southern Arts Federation takes me across many disciplines, so I come from out of the region and out of the field in some respects. Bob Baron invited me up for this session particularly because of two presentations that he had been on hand to hear me give, one was at the Arts of Black Folk Conference that was in New York City at the Schomburg Center, and then an open dialog in Washington, D.C. this summer in the folk arts panel discussion; there we were talking about advocacy for the traditional arts within the community. And that's essentially why he had invited me,

because he thought that a lot of what I said or thought or felt would fit in here, and I'm glad to have taken him up on his invitation, but you can keep your seventeen degree weather. I'm going back to fifty-nine in Atlanta real quick!

Community cultural empowerment: a much discussed topic among professionals. Structurally, I've found that these sessions that have this as a focus are usually set up the same, and I think the wording that was on the brochure is usually the way that these sessions are addressed: "Look at ways that communities can benefit from skills shared by professionals in the field" is pretty much the way they go at this. The exception, I felt, was the Schomburg program. What I thought was unique about this was that they took the statement here and essentially turned it around. They looked at ways that professionals in the field can benefit from the skills shared by communities. And the professionals were in the minority, and the community cultural workers, as I call them, were in the majority. And it was a sharing exchange session, very much like Vaughn's comment about community field workers helping to train the professionals. The atmosphere was not one of "professional, come and tell us how to," the atmosphere was one of "professionals, come and tell us what your perspectives are, then sit and listen to how we actually do it." And the atmosphere that surrounded that was a rewarding one for everybody that was there.

All of this is connected to the increasing disenchantment with the term "empowerment" and what it does and doesn't represent. We use it, I use it, I have to use it, in talking to my arts connections, because, you know, as much as we may have been uncomfortable with it, it's a brand new term to them, and trying to inject it into their fine arts work is an effort in and of itself. Lately I've been trying to take the half of that dictionary definition that speaks of "enabling" and use the term "enablement" instead of empowerment. You can debate whether or not they're the same thing, but I think it's similar to the discussions I have to have sometimes with folks with that accessibility to the arts for people that have disabilities. And it's the difference in the phrase "disabled people" and "people with disabilities." The first one implies that the personhood of that individual is somehow flawed by the disability, the second one implies that their personhood is intact, but they are slowed down by the disability. And I think "empowerment" and "enablement" has that fine line of a distinction of attitude and mindset of the person going into work in a community. Do they feelf the community is in need of empowerment, bringing power to them, or do they acknowledge the existing power there and simply create opportunities for that power to be utilized? Semantics can be a problem, but I think they help out in the long run.

There's a group of folks that I don't think get enough time, attention or connection to the professionals in the field, they were the ones that enriched the Schomburg program. I call them "community" advocates or community cultural workers. They're the people who are doing what you'd like to do on a regular basis, much like Chitt was describing, doing it full-

time, doing it well by their criteria for success, and could care less if you show up to help, approve, or have anything to do with it. They've been there for a long time, they welcome and celebrate the addition of professional expertise, but if you left tomorrow, they would not stop doing what they do to celebrate their own existence. So, in terms of visibility, they're invisible, usually, to all but those who know them personally. In terms of training or sophistication, they have neither. In terms of demand, they're seldom called upon to make presentations at national gatherings, except as they did at the Schomburg Center and found out that there's a good deal of expertise out there. In terms of value, they're critical to the cultural survival of their ethnic communities. They receive little recognition, they have nominal financial support. Talk about doing a lot with nothing, these people know how: they wrote the book. They work against a lot of resistance, and they don't get anywhere near as much recognition as I think they need to have.

Who are they? A couple of suggestions or just examples from people I have personally known: it's the church sister in the black congregation who always gets up in service and says: "Now we ought to sing," and she names out one of the old songs, and she says it emphatically, *"Now we ought to sing."* It's the tribal elder who's constantly lamenting the fact that young people are losing touch with tribal values, and just by constantly reminding people of that keeps that issue at a high level in the community. It's the college student who comes back to his or her urban neighborhood to teach African dance or civil rights history, after having been away and learned how to do it, and then come back and share it. It's the schoolteacher who's always seeming to be planning another cultural pageant in the school, much to the principal's discontent, and is always emphasizing, come Martin Luther King, come this, that, and the other, *"we ought to do something about this."* These are these people. And I think that they're critically important, and we usually speak of them in terms of what they don't know, and in terms of what they can't do, therefore creating the need for the professional to enter.

But just a few words about what they *do* do, what they *do* know: they recognize that the respect for tradition is not just sentimental or nostalgic. They hold very closely to the knowledge that many professionals, I think, ignore. That is that the power in their cultural traditions, that once it's relinquished is never regained. They're very sensitive to maintaining that. Sometimes the friction that may come up when a professional comes in and works with the community and encounters one of these local advocates is there because these folks are very sensitive. They're aware of the danger of relinquishing power. They also recognize that the power of their culture is inherently spiritual, and there's a spirituality connected to it which can't be tampered with. They see the materialism, the commercialization, and the institutionalization, sometimes in the form of grants in our latter twentieth century existence, as being a threat to that spirituality. And they're sensitive to having too much of that bureaucratic existence superimposed on

what to them is very tangibly spiritual. Coming in contact with these people is a unique experience. If you're fortunate to come in contact with them before you become a professional folklorist, you're in better shape than you are if you come in contact with them afterwards, because you're not quite as critical, you know, you haven't been through the training that says that this person doesn't know this or doesn't do that. You just open yourself up, and let them pour what they have into you. I was lucky enough to have that happen to me before I got into the professional world of what I do. What they have to offer the professional is that emphasis on the inherent importance of spirituality of what's going on that only they as members of those communities can really, really interpret, and at best, hopefully, we can grasp it and acknowledge it.

The main distinction I think between these folks and the professionals who come in to work with them and for them a lot of times is that their measurement for success, their criterion for success is very different because their emphasis is different. Many times the professional has, by necessity, their eye on the prize of the final product. They've got to produce that final outcome of whatever their project is, either for granting purposes or what have you. The community advocate has constantly before them that bigger picture of the importance of community well-being, the health, the welfare, and the longevity of their community. They never lose sight of that, regardless of how important the immediate project or program could be, and if it comes down to a choice between the perfection or the refinement, if you will, of a particular project, they will always opt for that larger good of community longevity and health and wellbeing. They don't scalpel out any particular aspect of their culture or their community from whatever. One particular lady that I had worked with when I was with the North Carolina Arts Council, although I kept trying, as a good folklorist, to bring her around to speaking in terms of the importance of traditionality and presentation, she kept saying, "Yeah, but you know we got to get these kids off the street!" And that was her focus for what we were trying to do. I mean that was *it!* And she was not going to compromise that for anything, and I soon acknowledged that and backed off and said, you know, best I learn how to think like she thinks, because although she saw what we were doing with the school kids and taking them out and meeting older singers in black churches, helping them learn the traditional line-dot hymns and all that: wonderful, glad, great. Her purpose: keep the kids off the street. My purpose: get a report ready for NEH. It was a very different focus. So I think that because of the difference in emphasis and the difference in focus of the community cultural advocate that, without that, without their perspective, the professional going in to work in a community can block it out and often misunderstand why these folks sometimes function the way they do.

So, all of that being an empowerment issue or an enabling issue I think is connected to our role as professionals, recognizing the value of these folks, not just as informants or as resource people, but as partners and

in many instances as possible, as instructors of how to look at what we're trying to see, and giving them, as mentioned earlier, full participation — if not control over what's happening — because through them will come the validity for the big picture, the well-being of the community, through the program that we're trying to initiate.

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